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REVOLUTIONARY REVIEWING: SARAH TRIMMER'S GUARDIAN OF EDUCATION

An Index

by

ANDREA IMMEL



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OCCASIONAL PAPERS 4

THE

GUARDIAN OF EDUCATION,

A PERIODICAL WORK:

CONSISTING OF

A PRACTICAL ESSAY ON CHRISTIAN EDUCATION FOUNDED IMMEDIATELY ON THE

Scriptures,

AND THE SACRED OFFICES OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

MEMOIRS OF MODERN PHILOSOPHERS.

LXTRACTS FROM THEIR WRITINGS.

EXTRACTS FROM SERMONS AND OTHER BOOKS RELATING TO RELIGIOUS LDUCATION;

A COPIOUS EXAMINATION

MODERN SYSTEMS OF EDUCATION.

CHIEDREN'S BOOKS, AND BOOKS FOR YOUNG PERSONS;

MRS. TRIMMER.

"The Religious Principle, if strongly inculated, will secure the well-formed heart from recessions — and of passion, will imprice the mind, at high unitaries, consistent, and or coal assume, who has make it results from a piot and exceed for heard according to the oral gradient ways. The many control of the coal former well from the coal former of the c

Dr. Brown's Sermons.

Vol. 1.

From May to December inclusive, 1802.

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LONDON.

PUBLISHED BY J. HATCHARD, BOOKSELLER TO HER MAJESTY OPPOSITE ALBANY HOUSE, PICCADILLY.

| BRATTALL, Princer, Great Winsmin Street, Haymarke

Revolutionary Reviewing: Sarah Trimmer's Guardian of Education And the Cultural Politics of Juvenile Literature

An Index to The Guardian

by

ANDREA IMMEL

With an Introduction

by

MITZI MYERS

Department of Special Collections University Research Library University of California Los Angeles 1990

Copyright © July 1990 by the Regents of the University of California ISSN 1041-1143 I would like to thank the UCLA Center for the Study of Women for generously providing me with the mini-grant which funded the bibliographical work on this project. I also wish to express my gratitude to the Center for its ongoing support of my historical research on women writers and issues of gender and for fostering an intellectual forum both supportive and critically aware. I am equally grateful to the Department of Special Collections for its expertise and encouragement and to Andrea Immel, whose knowledge and tireless work on this project have been invaluable.

Mitzi Myers

Research Associate, UCLA Center for the Study of Women Lecturer, UCLA Writing Programs and English



A genius pure from Envy's tainting gall, Meek in reproach, and careless of reward

So Jane West described her friend Sarah Trimmer in her obituary poem for the Gentleman's Magazine of March 1811. Other correspondents of the journal eagerly seconded this endorsement of Mrs. Trimmer as selfless "benefactor to the Nation at large" and urged that England commemorate her charitable and educational achievements by erecting a monument to her in St. Paul's Cathedral, like that of John Howard, the great prison reformer. The proposal illustrates the magnitude of Mrs. Trimmer's reputation during the French Revolutionary era. But the "good Mrs. Trimmer" of pious legend wears another face. When she is noticed in modern literary and cultural histories at all, she figures most conspicuously not as the guardian of education, but as its gorgon, a monstrous egotist determined to imprint her own conservative image on English culture, charitable practice, educational provision, and childhood reading. Neither image is wholly correct, but the interplay between these alternative views emblematizes a key shift in English history with much larger implications than the interpretation of one writer. Once culturally potent, now canonically marginal, Mrs. Trimmer and what she stood for are timely topics for bicentennial reassessment.

^{1.} Jane West, "To the Memory of Mrs. Trimmer," *Gentleman's Magazine* 81, part 1 (March 1811): 261; G. H., Letter on "Monument to Mrs. Trimmer," *Gentleman's Magazine* 81, part 1 (March 1811): 259.

In what has become the most often cited historical survey of children's literature, F. J. Harvey Darton pronounced magisterially some years ago, "The importance of Sarah Trimmer is that she *was* important. . . . The views of such a woman deserve sane examination." Darton rightly points to Trimmer's key role in constructing and representing her period's altering cultural climate. Yet his own very brief survey of Trimmer's importance offers no such analysis and rests upon unexamined assumptions, for example, that she was "non-political" and unreflective when she was neither:

She was ... good. She stood for all that solidity and stolidity which defeated Napoleon by not understanding him or realizing how huge was the menace of change. Stupid and intelligent at once; certain of all that was best in the past, yet blind to any decay; hardly aware, except by deprivations accepted in the plain course of duty and experience, that long life for all men is deciduous; severe (because she did not fully comprehend error), devout, and at the same time of great kindliness — she lived an honourable career without doubts of herself or hesitation about public conduct.²

Nor has Trimmer fared better in the most recent attempt to situate her educational and philanthropic contributions historically. Vividly and abundantly illustrated though it is, Mary V. Jackson's text recuperates the development of British children's literature as the familiar dichotomy of Oberon and the fairies versus the conservatives and the moralists, a reading

^{2.} F. J. Harvey Darton, *Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life*, 1932, 3rd ed. rev. Brian Alderson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 158.

of the past that partakes of the Romantic ideology of childhood it purports to analyze. The overview of Trimmer's politics in Jackson's chapter on "The Propaganda War in Lilliput" suffers from reliance on outdated secondary sources. Taking her information from A. Charles Babenroth's 1922 study of Wordsworthian childhood in relation to English poetry, Jackson transforms his undocumented reference to Trimmer into a propagandistic "tale for the lowly . . . in which Trimmer demonstrates how thrift, industry, and faith can overcome desperate poverty."

But Babenroth's reference was not to a fiction by Trimmer, but to a factual "Extract from an Account of a Cottager's Family, at Hasketon; by John Way, Esq. Nov. 6, 1798" printed in the second, expanded edition of Trimmer's philanthropic vade mecum for ladies, *The Oeconomy of Charity* (1801). The thrifty widow of Hasketon's story does indeed elucidate Trimmer's cultural politics, but not because she is a fiction designed to dupe the poor. What is most striking about the

^{3.} A. Charles Babenroth, English Childhood: Wordsworth's Treatment of Childhood in the Light of English Poetry from Prior to Crabbe, Columbia University Studies in English and Comparative Literature (New York: Columbia University Press, 1922), p. 157; Mary V. Jackson, Engines of Instruction, Mischief, and Magic: Children's Literature in England from Its Beginnings to 1839, Bison Books (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), p. 181. Of Trimmer's charity and Sunday School readers, which were adapted by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge and were thus influential in early nineteenth-century educational provision, Jackson observes only that "data . . . is scarce," p. 181.

widow is Trimmer's characteristic way of emblematizing this real life heroine's story as "an extraordinary instance of what maternal affection" can accomplish.⁴

Trimmer's description applies to her own wide-ranging and ambitious career as well. That career needs to be examined not just in terms of its supposed conservatism, but also as the cultural production of a woman writer foregrounding issues of gender, an "extraordinary instance" of "maternal affection." Because Trimmer's rhetorical posture is always that of maternal guardian, it is fitting that reassessment should commence with the work that makes her persona explicit. This index and the forthcoming commentary devoted to Trimmer's Guardian and its implications will thus be a start toward the comprehensive examination that Darton called for a half century ago. Trimmer's large contribution to the shift in manners and mores that marks off Enlightenment from Victorian England is encoded in the most venturesome of all her pioneering projects, the Guardian of Education (1802-6). This five-volume periodical is repeatedly cited in historical studies of children's literature, but it is far more than the first systematic reviewing organ for children's books or even a retrospective history of juvenile literature to date, valuable as these achievements are. The work provides a useful entry into the period's popular, political,

Mrs. [Sarah] Trimmer, The Oeconomy of Charity; or, An Address to Ladies; Adapted to the Present State of Charitable Institutions in England, 2 vols. (London: J. Johnson, F. and C. Rivington, G. G. and J. Robinson, Longman and Rees, and J. Hatchard, 1801), 2: 106.

and women's culture as well, as the comprehensive index which follows demonstrates.

Mrs. Trimmer's own practice with her phenomenally successful series of scripture and historical prints and commentaries suggests an appropriate model for analyzing her contribution to the history of women, children, education, and English culture. Prints and commentary could be purchased separately or together, along with explanatory material detailing their uses. The richness of Mrs. Trimmer's volumes requires similar explication. This index to the Guardian proper is an invaluable document for students of historical children's literature in search of information about genres and texts; it is intended as a comprehensive bibliographical finding tool, more precise and usable than prior reference volumes. The analytical commentary in the companion volume will develop the meaning of the bibliographical categories and make accessible to a much broader audience the range of issues the Guardian addresses. What might be done with an educational tool, as Mrs. Trimmer sagely recognized, is not completely self-evident; users profit from guidance. Thus the bibliography will be supplemented by a separate commentary, just as were Trimmer's prints.

Explicating the *Guardian*'s contribution sugggests the diversity and complexity of early children's literature and showcases UCLA's Children's Book Collection; genres need to be described and illustrated as well as indexed. Histories to date have been dismissive toward early juvenilia; the material discussed provides the basis for a badly needed revisionist reading of early children's literature. The commentary also

illuminates numerous topics of interest to a far wider range of scholars than students of historical children's literature. The major categories which require analysis in the light of current revisionist literary, historical, and feminist theory include the following, each of which must be broken down into its components and related to its historical background and contemporary scholarship. The categories addressed epitomize key issues in current controversies about women, childhood, literature, and cultural change.

To understand what is going on in the Guardian is to acquire an in-depth education in how to read historical women's writing, for it is rich in such gender issues as women and language, women's choice of genres, women's entry into public life through the use of certain literary forms, the cultural construction of motherhood, the conflation of mothering and authorship, women's responses to Revolution, including their mode of political commentary, entry into public life, and contribution to educational innovation and cultural reform. Trimmer's volumes also illuminate the history of childhood the cultural construction of childhood, the emergence of the Romantic ideology of childhood and children's reading that still warps literary history, controversies concerning the changing status of the child and the family — as well as children's literature proper: juvenile literature and the canon, types and genres, reviewing practices, theories of childhood reading, and controversies that persist even now, such as those over violence and over the suitability of fairy tales. Trimmer is invaluable in helping us to understand the emergence of children's literature as a separate field and in documenting what has persisted and what has changed. She informs us about educational provision, for many types of schools and schooling appear in the *Guardian*, which provides a compact and comprehensive overview of the period's educational controversies; the work also yields helpful information relative to historical literacy, a key topic just now; pedagogy, methodology, and content are all treated.

With politics as with education, Trimmer enters into all the day's hottest controversies through the innocuous back door of children's book reviewing; her work documents the emergent ideologies of English nationalism and patriotism. All her writings are central to study of the period's philanthropy and religion, so that this periodical is a goldmine for anyone concerned with the formation of Victorian religious life; much of the journal's total space is devoted to explicit religious discussion, which requires elucidation, as does its record of charitable provision. Trimmer is in fact a conservative woman doing radical things via religion and philanthropy. The Guardian similarly throws light on publishing history and marketing practices; just one of Trimmer's pioneering contributions to the periodical press, this journal is part of a broader and more comprehensive project. It is a rich source for understanding the production and consumption of knowledge and literature. Trimmer helps us understand her period's conception of literature and knowledge as cultural commodities. These volumes also document shifting manners and mores; they are crucial for our understanding of cultural and social history and the strategies by which Victorian English values replaced eighteenth-century patterns. Trimmer's work embraces all classes and illuminates our understanding of their interrelation; moreover, her connections with the classes below and above show how English nationalism emerged through new class coalitions and how English reform took such a different shape from that of France. Finally, the periodical reveals philosophical and intellectual attitudes; because the subject matter included is so diverse, it clarifies the period's habits of thinking on such central topics as the emergent contention between science and religion.

Mrs. Trimmer was specially concerned with visual literacy and a pioneer in the use of illustrations for pedagogic purposes. It will therefore be especially appropriate to represent the categories she helps us understand with material from the collection. Little has been done with early illustration; here too the explanatory volume will break new ground for investigation.

The companion numbers can be used together or separately, just as could Mrs. Trimmer's own productions. Like her work, they are structured to appeal to diverse audiences and understandings. Reviewing an alphabetically organized bibliography of early children's literature, the pioneering book collector Peter Opie observes of such an arrangement that it "makes manifest no progression . . . tells no story; that we are unable to see by its continuity the relationship that any one entry has with another." A more helpful scheme, he suggests, would have been to see all the related publications as "the integral parts of one great story: the rise and progress of the House of Newbery. . . . no work can be a great work . . . that simply documents its subject. . . . Some insight must hold it together, some passion give it life; the value of the work as a

whole must transcend the sum of its parts." Without laying claim to the status of "great work," we hope that these detailed resources will be useful in opening a rich research field to further exploration, that they will serve as integral parts of the great story of women's entry into authorship.

^{5.} Peter Opie, Review of *John Newbery and His Successors*, by S. Roscoe, *The Book Collector* 24.2 (Summer 1975): 265-67.

Note to the User

Scope: Authors and titles of all essays, extracts, book reviews and correspondence published in the Guardian of Education have been indexed here. However, only the book reviews and discussions of education have been fully subject-indexed. Thus Mrs. Trimmer's Sequel to the Essay on Christian Education and those pieces appearing in the regular features "Extracts" or "Memoirs of Infidel Authors" or which discuss theology or the Millenium have not been analyzed in depth. Publishers of the children's books have not been indexed: Mrs. Trimmer did not record the imprints in full. It would have been too time-consuming to identify them so that the listings for each bookseller would be complete and accurate.

Entries: Complete listings are provided for each piece under the author or the title for anonymous works. Imprints are recorded as Mrs. Trimmer gives them. Abbreviated entries with page numbers are given for titles, subjects and genres. Place of publication, unless otherwise noted, is London.

Arrangement: Authors, genres, subjects and titles are interfiled into one alphabetical sequence. For each topic or genre, subject sub-entries are listed first, with the list of books reviewed following. Any see-also references file at the end of the list of book reviews.

Note: Copies of books reviewed in the *Guardian* have been consulted whenever possible.

Α

A. L. B. See Barbauld, Anna A., L. M., correspondent, "Account

of the Death of a Modern Philosopher," 4:253-256

Abridgment of English Grammar (Murray), 2:419

Abstract of a Discourse (Waterland), 4:343-357

Abstract to the Preface of Bishop Horne's "Commentary," 3:178-179, 4:228-236

Accidence (Devis), 3:303

Accomplishments: 1:369, 2:400-406, 429, 3:343, 350-352, 5:160, 190; dancing, 2:254-255, 401-402,

3:258, 350; drawing, 2:403, 3:159, 350, 352; music, 2:254, 400-401, 3:109-111, 350, 352, 4:414-416, 5:71-74. See also Education

"Account of the Death of a Modern Philosopher" (A., L. M., correspondent), 4:253-256

"Account of the Present State of Education in France" (Anonymous correspondent), 2:253-256

Acton, Eugenia de (pseud.). See Lewis, Alethea

Adam and Eve, 1:173-174, 2:203-206, 271-272, 502-504

Adams, Rev. John, Roman History, from the Foundation of Rome to the Subversion of the Eastern Empire,

- and the Taking of Constantinople by the Turks (Law, 1805), 5:93
- Addison & Steele: "Inkle and Yarico," 1:429; Spectator, 1:62, 433, 3:387, 388, 5:130, 147-148; review: Selections from the Spectator, Tatler, Guardian and Freeholder. 3 v. (Johnson, 1804), 4: 304-308
- "Address to Christians, Recommending the Distribution of Religious Tracts" (Williams; RTS, publications, v. 1), 4:53-58
- "Address to Ladies" (Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor), 3:251-254
- "Address to the Public" (Society for the Suppression of Vice), 2:127-128, 3:148-150
- Addresses of an Affectionate Mother (Sandham), 2:423-424
- Addresses to a Young Lady on Her Entrance into the World. 2 v. (1100kham, 1796), 3:200-208, 236-242
- Adelaide and Theodore (Genlis), 2:293-302
- "Admonition against Lay Preaching" (Pearson), 5:94
- Adolescents: 5:23-24; books for, history of, 1:61-66; characters of, 1:447-449, 2:382-384, 5:136-137, 410-416; defined, 1:65-66; debut of, 3:336-342; delinquent, 2:413-414; diary, of an adolescent girl, 5:138-151; education, Christian, 2:280-281, 3:1-82, 113-139, 209-229, 305-323, 4:1-31, 113-141, 209-227, 313-340, 5:97-117, 193-235, 305-399; piety in, 2:282-384, 5:138-151

- books for, reviews: Addison and Steele, *Selections from the Spectator*, 4:304-308
- Addresses to a Young Lady, 3: 200-208
- Adventures of Kamoula, 1:319-320
- "Advice and Admonition," 3:176-178
- Aikin, Letters from a Father, 2:373-377; Letters to a Young Lady, 3:285-294
- Andrews, Manuscripts of Vertudeo, 1:127-128
- Berquin, *Children's Friend*, 2:436-446
- Bonhote, Parental Monitor, 3:389-395
- Bowdler, Elizabeth, *Practical Observations*, 3:195-197
- Bowdler, Jane, *Poems*, 3:198-199
- Bowles, Remarks on Modern Female Manners, 1:513-514
- Brewer, *Life of Rolla*, 2:189-192; *Siamese Tales*, 2:497-498
- Chapone, Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, 1:330-333
- Chesterfield, Letters to His Son, 2:425
- *Christmas Tales*, 3:383-389
- Circle of the Sciences, 5:423
- Collet, Sacred Dramas, 5:297-299
- "Cottager's Religious Meditations," 2:371-373
- Creswick, Lady's Preceptor, 2:490-491
- Defoe, Robinson Crusoe, 3:297-300

- Adolescents, books for (continued)
 - Diatessarion, 3:188-189
 - Dick the Little Poney, Author of, Dog of Knowledge, 1:327-330
 - Dodsley, Economy of Human Life, 1:455-461
 - Ducray-Duminil, Little Mountaineers, 2:466
 - E., H., Natural History of the Earth, 1:271-272
 - "Earnest Exhortation," 3:106
 - Edgeworth, *Moral Tales*, 2:425-432
 - Elegant Preceptor, 2:55
 - Elements of Natural Philosophy,5:88
 - Enchanted Mirror, 1:440
 - Essay on the Beauties of the Universe, 3:170-176
 - Evans, Sketch of the Denominations, 2:229, 251-252
 - Familiar Instructions, 2:52-54
 - Fanshawe, Easter Holidays, 2:494-495
 - Fenn, Short History of the Bees, 1:523-525; Some Hints to Young Women, 5:514-515
 - "Few Words," 2:54
 - Fielding, Governess, 1:137-138
 - Filial Duty, 2:186-188
 - Fleury, Short History of the Ancient Israelites, 2:311-319
 - Florian, Select Fables, 5:423
 - "Few Words to the Friends of the Poor," 3:105-106
 - Friendly Instructor, 2:432-433
 - Galton, Natural History of Birds, 2:497
 - Gardiner, Excursion from London to Dover, 5:425

- Genlis, Age of Chivalry, 2:433-434 La Bruyère the Less, 1:443-449 Sagrad Dramas, 2:500,507
 - Sacred Dramas, 2:500-507 Theatre of Education, 2:507-511
- Gessner, *Death of Abel*, 1:203-207
- Gleaner, 3:383-389
- Goldsmith, Natural History
 Abridged for the Use of
 Schools, 2:116-120
- Good Effects of Sincere and Constant Prayer, 2:447-448
- Hale, Affectionate Epistles, 3:377-383
- Haller, *Letters*, 2:50-53
- *Hamlain*, 1:312-315; *Hamlain*, Author of, *Moralist*, 1: 315-316
- Hanway, Domestic Happiness Promoted, 2:493-494
- The Hare, 1:323
- Hayley, *Ballads*, 4:416-426
- Helme, Instructive Rambles, 1:133-134; Maternal Instruction, 2:56-59
- Hill, Mrs., Poetical Monitor, 1:130-132
- History of Man in a Savage and Civilized State, 2:250-251
- Hive, 3:383-389
- Holloway, *British Museum*, 2:495-497
- Horne, Abstract of Bishop Horne's Preface to His Commentary on the Psalms, 3:178-179
- Hunter, Letters from Mrs. Palmerstone, 5:82-88
- Hurry, Tales, 2:491-492

- Adolescents, books for (continued)
 - I., P., Dramatic Pieces, 2:377-381
 - Importance of Religion Considered, 1:333-334
 - Julius, 1:438-439
 - Juvenile Library, 1:316-317
 - Juvenile Plutarch, 1:128-130
 - Juvenile Tales, 3:383-389
 - Kendall, *Keeper's Travels*, 1:393-400; *Lessons of Virtue*, 2:371
 - Kilner, M., Course of Lectures for Sunday Reading, 2:54, 5: 88-93; Sacred Exhibition at Worthington Hall, 1:450-455
 - Kotzebue, Guardian Angel, 1:317-318
 - Lambert, Anne, Mother's Advice, 1:320-323
 - Letters of Consolation and Advice, 3:189-195
 - Lewis, Essays on the Art of Being Happy, 3:199-200
 - Macgowan, Life of Joseph, 2:120-125
 - Magnet, Newtonian System, 1:441-442
 - Mavor, Father's Gift, 4:190-194
 Historical Account of the Voyages of Captain Cook, 5:81

Juvenile Olio, 2:434-436

- Mental Amusement, 1:272
- Mental Pleasures, 4:95-97
- Mince Pies for Christmas, 4:97-101
- More, Sacred Dramas, 2:498-501
- Napleton, Sermons, 3:185-186, 5:67-69

- Obsolete Ideas, 5:186-191
- Owen, Fashionable World Displayed, 4:426-432
- Palace of Enchantment, 4:94-95
- Partridge, On the Reverence Due to Old Age, 2:249-250
- Peacock, Visit for a Week, 1:319
- Pennington, *Unfortunate Mother's Advice*, 1:327-327
- Pilkington, Mentorial Tales, 1:437-438; Mirror for the Female Sex, 2:319-320
- Pinchard, Blind Child, 2:493 Dramatic Dialogues, 2:446-447
 - Two Cousins, 1:441
- Plain and Easy Introduction, 1:310-312
- Plumbtre, C., *Christian Guide*, 3:186-187
- Plumptre, J., Collection of Songs, 4:414-416
- Plunkett, Village Library, 1:318-319
- Porter, *Princes of Persia*, 1:132-133
- Rational Dialogues, 3:383-389
- Rees, Short and Practical Account, 4:195
- "Reflections on the Present Times," 3:294-296
- Richardson, C., *Poems*, 5:180-186
- Richmond, "Sermon," 2:249
- Rictrie, Present for Youth, 1:515-523
- S., E., *Interesting Tales*, 4:194-195
- S., M., Letters from a Mother, 5:425-426

- Adolescents, books for (continued)
 - Sacred Hours, 3:179-185
 - Saint-Pierre, *Indian Cottage*, 2:364-369; *Paul and Virginia*, 2:369-371
 - Sanders, Holidays at Home, 4:89-90
 - Sandham, More Trifles, 4:84-89; Twin Sisters, 5:70-79
 - Sermons on the Doctrines and Duties of Christianity, 2:125-127
 - Sharpe, *Remarks*, 3:98-105
 - Sherwood, History of Susan Gray, 1:267-268
 - Short History of Insects, Author of, Select Passages, 4:432-433
 - "Short Practical Explanation," 2:246-248
 - Smith, C., Minor Morals, 2:381-382

 Rambles Further, 2:381

Rural Walks, 2:381, 495

- Smith, T., Shepherd's Son, 1:324-325; Universal Atlas, 1:207-208
- Soave, Moral Tales, 2:125
- Society for the Suppression of Vice, "Address," 2:127-128
- Summer Amusements, 3:383-389
- Tales for Youth, 2:188
- Thoughts on Affectation, 5:300-304
- Vain Cottager, 3:296-297
- Ventum, Amiable Tutoress, 1:324; Interesting Traits, 4:90
- Wakefield, *Juvenile Travellers*, 1:134-137

- Watkins, *Scripture Biography*, 1:269-270
- Watts, Improvement of the Mind, 2:424-425
- Welbeloved, Devotional Exercises, 5:79-81
- West, Jane, "Friendly Address to the Labouring Part of the Community," 3:105-106

Letters Addressed to a Young Man, 1:76-77

Poems and Plays, 4:308-312

- Wheatley, *Christmas Fireside*, 5:167-180; *Friendly Adviser*, 1:440
- "Word to the Wise," 3:297

 Adventures of a Pin-Cushion (Kilner, M.), 1:124, 436

Adventures of a Silver Penny (Johnson, R.), 1:428

Adventures of a Silver Three-Pence (Truelove), 1:505

Adventures of Kamoula (Lackington, 1801), 1:319-320

Adventures of Master Headstrong and Miss Patient (Harris), 1:503-504

Adventures of Musul (Kendall), 1:425

Advice. See Conduct; Essays; Letters

"Advice and Admonition Suggested to the Middle-Aged, in Rural and Humble Life" (Wingrove, 1804), 3:176-178

"Advice to a Young Man" (Watts), 5:50-51

Aesop, 1:62, 4:21, 34, 297, 5:284. See also Fables

Affectation, 5:300-304. See also Manners

Affectionate Epistles (Hale), 3:377-383 Age of Chivalry (Genlis), 2:433-434 Aikin, John, Arts of Life, as Described in a Series of Letters (Johnson, 1802), 1:118-119

- Evenings at Home, 2:170, 175;review: 5th ed. (Johnson, 1802), 2:304-311, 343-353
- Letters from a Father to His Son.v. (Johnson, 1793), 2:373-377
- Letters to a Young Lady, on a Course of English Poetry (Johnson, 1804), 3:285-294

Aikin, Lucy, *Poetry for Children* (R. Phillips, 1801), 1:307

Alembert, Jean Le Rond d': anti-Christian conspiracy and, 1:9-10, 148-149; *Encyclopédie* and, 1:210-217; death of, 1:335. See also Freethinking

Allegory: 1:91-99, 158-162; Bible and, 2:106-107, 111; fables and, 5:283-290; reviews: *Adventures of Master Headstrong*, 1:503-504

- Anecdotes of a Little Family, 1:423
- Bunyano, Prettiest Book for Children, 1:437
- Campbell, Worlds Displayed, 2:106-111
- Hunter, Letters from Mrs. Palmerstone, 5:82-88
- Juvenile Library, 1:316-317
- Kendall, Adventures of Musul, 1:425
- Peacock, Six Princesses of Babylon, 4:173

Alphabets: 1:62, 2:19, 4:379; Bureau Typographique, 2:19-20; horn-

books, 1:5; review: Child's Delight, 1:505; Playful, Take Your Choice, 1:197-198. See also Reading Amiable Tutoress (Ventum), 1:324 Amusement, 1:449, 2:18, 28, 293, 4:99, 413-414. See also Play Amusement Hall (Neale), 2:487 Amusements of the Heart and Understanding (German children's periodical), 4:278

Amusing and Instructive Tales (Wynne), 1:425

Ancient History (Rollin), 2:293, 407 Ancients, versus moderns, 4:277-278, 341-347, 5:25-42, 169-175

Andrews, Eliza, Manuscripts of Vertudeo (Hatchard, 1801), 1:127-128 "Anecdotes and Hints Relative to a Prevailing but Indefensible Practice" (RTS, no. XXX), 4:395

Anecdotes of a Little Family (Newbery), 1:423

Angels, 2:345, 4:79

Animal autobiography. See Autobiography, animal

Animal Biography (Bingley), 2:117
Animals: 3:274; children and, 1:424, 2:185, 4:422-423, 425; cruelty to, 1:399, 424, 505-506, 2:249, 485-486; emblems and, 4:417; fables and, 5:286-290; Hayley's Ballads and, 4:416-426; kindness to, 1:304, 323, 399-400, 2:185; Providence and, 1:328-330; status of, 1:304-305, 395-400, 2:308, 496-497, 3:386-391, 4:31-41, 141-144, 417-418; reviews: Berquin, Children's Friend, 2:436-446

Dick the Little Poney, Author of, Dog of Knowledge, 1:327-330

- Grandmother's Stories, 1:306
- -- The Hare, 1:323
- Hayley, *Ballads*, 4:416-426
- Holloway, *British Museum*, 2:495-497
- Jones, S., Life and Adventures of a Fly, 2:184-185
- Kendall, Crested Wren, 1:299 Keeper's Travels, 1:393-400 Sparrow, 1:423-424
- Kilner, D., Life and Perambulation of a Mouse, 1:123-124, 435-436; Rational Brutes, 1:309
- Little Juba, 1:298
- Pilkington, Marvelous Adventures, 1:303
- Pratt, *Pity's Gift*, 1:304-306. See also Fiction
- Anonymous (correspondents to the *Guardian*), "Account of the Present State of Education in France," 2:253-256
 - "Prospectus of an Intended Publication of a Collection of Gazettes," 5:95-96
 - "Short Abstract of Dr. Kipling's Pamphlet on Calvinism," 2:59-64
- "Answer to the Question" (Taylor, T.), 4:60
- Anthologies, reviews: Addison & Steele, *Selections*, 4:304-308
 - Aikin, Evenings at Home, 2:304-311, 343-353
 - Anecdotes of a Little Family, 1:423
 - Berquin, *Children's Friend*, 2:436-446
 - *Christmas Tales*, 3:383-389

- Elegant Preceptor, 2:55
- Evening Recreations, 1:437
- Fenn, Family Miscellany, 5:56-57
- Filial Duties, 2:286-288
- Gleaner, 3:383-389
- Governess, 2:488-489
- Grandmother's Stories, 1:306
- Hunter, Letters from Mrs. Palmerstone, 5:82-88
- Juvenile Tales, 3:383-389
- Kendall, Lessons of Virtue,2:371
- Mavor, Father's Gift, 4:190-194; Juvenile Olio, 2:434-436
- Mental Pleasures, 4:95-97
- Museum for Young Gentlemen and Ladies, 2:183
- Neale, Amusement Hall, 2:487
- Pratt, Paternal Present, 1:306
- Roberts, M., Telescope, 4:82-83
- Sanders, Holidays at Home, 4:89-90
- Sandham, *More Trifles*, 4:84-89, *Trifles*, 1:427-428
- Short History of Insects, Author of, Select Passages, 4: 432-433
- Sunday Miscellany, 3:167-168
- Tales for Youth, 2:188
- Anthropaeideia (Cowan), 4:154-155 Antichrist, 5:221-235, 341-343. See also Millenium
- Anxious Observer, correspondent, "Music in Young Ladies' Education," 3:109-111
- Aphorisms for Youth, with Observations and Reflections (Lackington, 1801), 4:90-94
- Apostles' Creed, 1:9, 2:155. See also Prayers

- "Appeal to the Christians" (RTS, no. XLIV), 5:164-165
- Appetites, moderation of, 1:105-106, 178-179, 2:154-155, 221-223, 281, 292-302, 3:160-161, 266
- Apprentices: 1:199; books for: *Tales for Youth*, 2:188
- Arabian Nights, 1:142, 437, 2:408
- Arithmetic: 2:403, 5:269-271; reviews: Butler, *Arithmetical Questions*, 4:101-104
 - Fenn, Friend of Mothers, 2:49
 - Holland, Definitions, 4:195-199
 - Joyce, Scientific Dialogues, 1:306-307
 - Library for Youth, 1:309
 - Taylor, Adam, Useful Arithmetic, 3:302-303
- Arithmetical Questions (Butler), 4:101-104
- Arts of Life (Aikin, J.), 1:118-119 Asiatic Princess (Pilkington), 1:425 Asiatic Researches (Jones, Sir William), 2:305-306
- Association of ideas, 1:54-56, 72, 107-111, 240, 250, 378, 413, 497, 2:161-162, 4:78-79. See also Ideas
- Astronomy: 2:305-306; reviews: *Elements of Astronomy*, 3:302
 - First Elements of Astronomy, 4:169-171
 - Frend, Evening Amusements, 3:96-97
 - Joyce, Scientific Dialogues, 1:306-307
 - Library for Youth, 1:309
- Smith, T., *Universal Atlas*, 1:207-208. See also Science Atheism, 1:84-85, 310-312, 2:101-

- 106, 3:82, 5:20-21, 220-221. See also Freethinking
- Attempt to Adapt Sacred History (Burgh), 5:53-54
- Atterbury, Francis (bishop of Rochester), 5:138-139
- Augustus Caesar, 4:385, 390, 392. See also Monarchy
- Aulnoy, Marie Catherine: Contes des fées, 1:142; reviews: Mother Bunch's Fairy Tales (Newbery), 2:185; Renowned History of the White Cat (Newbery), 1:432
- Authority: Bible, of, 2:272-276, 5:131-132; children and, 2:32, 164-165; education and, 1:115, 203-206; governesses', 1:368-369; parental, 1:233-244, 352-362, 378-381, 418-419, 3:266, 5:263-266; prejudice against, 1:115-118, 122, 431, 434-435, 507, 2:307-310, 3:384-385, 4:169. See also Duty
- Autobiography: 2:382-384, 5:139-151, 243-250; review: Jenner, *Fortune's Football*, 5:420-422
 - autobiography, animal (fictional genre), reviews: *Dick the Little Poney*, Author of, *Dog of Knowledge*, 1:327-330
 - Grandmother's Stories, 1:306
 - Hare, 1:323
 - Jones, S., Life and Adventures of a Fly, 2:184-185
 - Kendall, Crested Wren, 1:299 Keeper's Travels, 1:393-400 Sparrow, 1:423-424
 - Kilner, D., Life and Perambulation of a Mouse, 1:123-124, 435-436; Rational Brutes, 1:309

- Little Juba, 1:298
- Pilkington, Marvelous Adventures, 1:303

See also Fiction

- autobiography, inanimate objects (fictional genre), reviews: *Instructive Tales*, Author of, *Silver Thimble*, 2:184
- Johnson, R., Adventures of a Silver Penny, 1:428
- Kilner, M., Adventures of a Pin-Cushion, 1:124, 436; Memoirs of a Peg-Top, 1:124, 436
- Smythies, History of a Pin, 1:423
- Truelove, Adventures of a Silver Three-Pence, 1:505. See also Fiction

В

- B., A. L. See Barbauld, AnnaB., J. W. L., correspondent, "Mr. Frend's Evening Amusements," 4:110-112
 - -- "Exemplary Character of R. H.," 3:242-251, 5:42-44
 - "Strictures on the Duties of Masters and Mistresses," 1:279-284
- B., S., correspondent, "Scripture Readings in Sabbath Observance," 3:111-112

Babies. See Infants

- Bacon, Francis, 4:248-249, 251-252, 369, 5:134n. See also Philosophy
- Badger, Charlotte, Friendly Admonitions to Parents and the Female Sex (Cadell and Davies, 1803), 3:344-351

- Bag of Nuts Ready to Be Cracked (Thumb), 1:504
- Baldwin, Edward (pseud.). See Godwin, William

Ballads (Hayley), 4:416-426

- Baptism: infant, 1:34-49, 169-183; regeneration versus, 4:392-393, 397-400, 5:52-53; sacrament of, 4:156-157, 165; review: Pearson, "Plain Reasons for the Practice of Infant Baptism," 5:94. See also Sacraments
- Barbauld, Anna: Addison and Steele, eritical appraisal of, 4:305-307
 - Chapone, Hester, critical appraisal of, 1:330-333
 - Evenings at Home, 2:170, 175, 178, 385, 392; review: 5th ed. (Johnson, 1802), 2:304-311, 343-353
 - Hymns in Prose, 2:90, 152; review: (Johnson), 2:45-48
 - influence of, 1:63-64, 3:168-169, 375-376, 4:189
 - Lessons for Children, 1:63-64, 2:170, 175-176, 177, 180, 443; review: 4 pts. (Johnson), 2:43-45
- Barrow, Rev. William, Essay on Education in Which Are Particularly Considered the Merits and Defects of the Discipline and Instruction in Our Academies, 1:112-118, 158, 192-197, 2:399
- Barruel, Augustin de, "Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism...Translated into English by Robert Clifford," 1:17-21, 145-152, 209-219, 273-279. See also Freethinking

Basedow, Johann Bernhard: fables of, 3:363; influence of, 1:14-16; philanthropines of, 2:141, 174, 4:248

Bates, Ely, Rural Philosophy, or Reflections on Knowledge, Virtue and Happiness, 5:128-135

Bathing, 3:160

Beattie, J. H., "On the Excellence of Christianity," 4:205-208

Beautiful Page; or, Child of Romance (Hurst, 1802), 1:303-304

Bees, 1:524-525

Bell, Andrew, Experiment in Education, Made at the Male Asylum at Egmore, near Madras. 2nd ed. (Cadell and Davies, 1805), 4:370-382

Benevolence: 1:302-304, 5:33-34; animals and, 1:304, 323, 399-400, 424, 2:185, 4:422-423, 425; cultivation of, 1:347-374, 2:349-350, 395, 5:267-269; sensibility and, 2:438-439, 5:128-130; sympathy and, 2:166-168

Berquin, Arnaud, *Children's Friend*. 2nd ed. in 4 vols. (1788), 2:436-446 Bible (Note: reviews of children's versions of the Bible follow subentry for "historical books, children's versions"):

- Adam and Eve, 1:173-174, 2:203-206, 271-272, 502-504
- allegory and, 2:106-107, 111
- authority of, 2:272-276, 5:131-
- ehildren, comprehension of,
 2:160-163, 282-283
 introduction to, 1:489-490,
 519-521, 2:89, 99, 3:107-108

paraphrases for, 1:125-127, 248-264, 2:283, 3:268-273, 4:168-169, 196-198, 5:64 selections for, 1:248-264, 2:283-295, 3:179-180, 268-273, 5:64

- David, 4:217-222
- Decalogue, 1:9, 2:155-158,3:309-311, 4:359-360, 5:5-7
- editing of, 3:98-99
- education, 1:5, 414-416, 2:210-219, 282-295, 3:188-189, 5:1-24; moral, and 2:145-146, 305, 3:107-108
- freethinking and, 1:244-264
- Genesis, 3:358-370
- grace and, 1:479-481
- hieroglyphic Bibles, 1:381-391
- historical books, children's versions, 1:203-207, 2:121-125, 210-226, 282-295, 498-507, 5:22, 297-299

reviews: Burgh, Attempt to Adapt Sacred History, 5:53-54 C., W., Epitome of Sacred History, 1:125-127

Collet, Sacred Dramas, 5:297-299

Genlis, Sacred Dramas, 2:500-507

Geographical Companion, 2:489

Gessner, Death of Abel, 1:203-207

Godwin, Bible Stories, 1:244-264; Sacred Histories, 3:372-375

Grant, Manual of Religious Knowledge, 5:57-66

```
Macgowan, Life of Joseph,
        2:120-125
      More, Sacred Dramas,
        2:498-501
      Watkins, Scripture Biog-
        raphy, 1:269-270
— interpretation of, 1:125-127,
   2:375-377, 169, 196-198
— Israelites, 2:273-277, 3:11-67,
   122-139, 215-229, 4:18-26,
   113-141, 208-227, 5:6-22
— Jesus, instruction about, 2:85-88
      Messiah, as, 4:313-340,
        5:110-117, 193-203, 251-
        262
      miracles of, 5:67-69, 257-
        262
      new Covenant and, 5:108-
        117
      prophecies of, 5:193-205
      types of, 4:113-141, 209-227
- Joshua, 4:127-139
- Millenium, 4:308-312, 5:304-
    399
      Antichrist and, 5:221-235,
        341-343
      godliness, mystery of, 3:113-
        139, 5:305-399
      iniquity, mystery of, 1:164-
        168, 3:113-139, 232-236,
        4:23-24, 5:211-235
      Satan and, 3:1-82, 113-139,
        209-229, 4:328-331
— Moses, 4:3-31, 5:6-12
— Mosaic law, 3:305-323, 4:4-18,
    31-40, 113-115, 141-144, 358-
```

370, 5:5-22

— Pentateuch, 5:1-24

Paul, Saint, 4:389-390

- prophecies and prophets:

```
Daniel, 3:67-68, 4:331-332,
      5:103-107
       Jesus, 4:314-340, 5:107-117,
          251-262
        Moses, 4:26-31
        Revelations, 5:305-399
       Samuel, 4:209-217
       symbolic language of, 5:117-
          128
 — Revelations, 1:81-84, 5:305-399
 — reverence for, 1:71-76, 125-127,
      315-316, 455-461

    Sabbath observance and, 2:231-

      342
 - Samuel, 4:208-216
 — Solomon, 4:222-224
 - study aids for, 3:1-82, 113-139,
      209-229, 305-323, 4:1-31, 113-
      141, 209-236, 313-340, 358-
      370, 5:97-117, 193-235,
      305-399
 translations of, 4:196-199
"Bible of Divine Authority" (RTS,
 no. XXXVIII), 4:395
Bible Stories (Godwin), 1:244-264
Bingley, William, Animal Biography,
 2:117
Biography: 1:128-130, 232; reviews:
  Burnet, "Repentance and Happy
 Death of the Celebrated Earl of
 Rochester," 4:158

    Doddridge, "Life of Colonel

      James Gardiner," 4:295-296
 - History of Prince Lee Boo,
      1:299-300
 — Juvenile Library, 1:316-317
 - Juvenile Plutarch, 1:128-130
 - Library for Youth, 1:309
 - "Life and Sayings of Mr. Philip
      Henry," 4:296
```

- "Life of Mr. John Bunyan," 4:159
- Macgowan, Life of Joseph, 2:120-125
- Mangnall, Historical and Miscellaneous Questions, 5:192
- Pilkington, Mirror for the Female Sex, 2:319-320
- Rictrie, "Present for Youth," 1:515-523
- "Short Narrative...of King Charles II," 5:422-423
- Wakefield, Leisure Hours, 1:264-265
- Watkins, *Scripture Biography*, 1:269-270
- Wheatley, *Christmas Fireside*, 5:167-180

Birthday (Somerville), 1:301

Bisset, James, Geographical Guide, a Poetical Nautical Trip round the Island of Great Britain (Harris, 1804), 4:75-77

Blacks, 2:351-352, 3:384

Blind Child (Pinchard), 2:493

Blount, Charles, 2:69

Blue Beard: 1:143, 2:186; review: (Tabart, 1804), 4:74-75

Board games: 3:257; review: *New Game of Emulation*, 4:77. See also Toys

Bolingbroke, Henry St. John, 2:257-272, 321-324, 385-395, 449-454. See also Freethinking

Bonhote, Elizabeth, *Parental Monitor*. 3rd ed. 4 v. (Lane), 3:389-395

Book of Common Prayer, 1:5
Book of Games; or, A History of the
Juvenile Sports Practised at the

Kingston Academy (Tabart, 1805), 4:301-304

Book of Nature (Jones, W.), 3:273-283

Book of Trades; or Library of the Useful Arts. 3 pts. (Tabart, 1805), 4:304

"Books and Tracts Dispersed" (SPCK), 4:58-61

Books: amusement in, 1:506, 4:413-414

- anti-Christian conspiracy and,1:15, 138-144, 2:482-484
- booksellers, catalogs of, 3:208 duties of, 3:388 shops of, 4:98-99
- children's, anti-Christian conspiracy and, 1:2-3, 64-65, 68-76, 244-264, 455-462, 2: 100-106, 358, 364-371, 3:148-150, 359-372, 4:167-168, 461-462

censorship of, by mothers, 1:267, 372, 431, 506, 2:170, 184, 4:98-101, 5:93-94; by publishers, 1: 442, 4:83; by the Society for Suppression of Vice, 2:127-128

effects, 1:391-392, 394-395, 430, 520-523

history of, 1:61-66

illustrations for, 1:62, 381-391, 429, 2:23-24, 296-297, 485-486, 3:268, 362, 4:73, 74-75, 303, 304, 410, 428-429n, 5:284, 295-296, 412

picture books, 2:485 prices of, 2:183, 4:413 prefaces to, 4:94-95

```
recommended, 1:8-12,
          2:407-410
       selection, guidelines for, 1:2,
          2:407, 4:99
       standards for, 1:124, 246,
          2:354-355, 4:413
       status of, 4:64
       traets as, 4:52
 - circulating libraries, 1:63
 - miniature, 1:309, 509
 - modern, 1:246
 - pockets for, 1:500
 - readers and spellers, 4:482-484
 - reading, 2:150-152, 160, 420-
      422
       leisure, 1:62, 72, 409-410,
          2:183, 190
       boy, of a, 5:415-417
       girl, of a, 5:139-151
       teaching of, 1:5, 62, 2:19-22,
          4:304-307, 379
 - recommended, for girls, 3:114-
      116
       for mothers, 3:107-108
       for school teachers, 2:229
 — Sabbath observance and, 3:350
 - subscriptions for, 4:433-436,
      5:95-96, 427-428
Botany: 2:305-306; reviews: Garden
 Amusements, 4:172-173
 — Jauffret, Visits to the Menagerie,
      1:201-202
 - Library for Youth, 1:309. See
      also Natural History
Bowdler, Elizabeth, Practical Obser-
 vations on the Revelations of St.
 John (Hatchard, 1801), 3:195-197
Bowdler, Jane, Poems and Essays,
 5:139, 140; review: 10th ed. (Dilly,
 1798), 3:198-199
```

```
Bowles, John, Remarks on Modern
  Female Manners...Extracted Chiefly
 from Reflections Political and Moral,
  at the Conclusion of the War, 5:191;
  review: (Rivingtons), 1:513-514
Boys: brothers, 1:362-368, 3:339, 5:
  159-160; character of a 14-year-
  old, 5:410-417; education of,
  2:398-400, 494-495, 3:84, 5:412-
  417; fiction, effects on, 3:298; read-
  ing of, 5:415-416; books for,
  reviews: Aikin, Letters from a
  Father, 2:373-377
  - Fanshawe, Easter Holidays,
      2:494-495
  - Fenwick, Presents for Good
      Boys, 4:413
 - History of a School-Boy, 1:434-
      435
  Kilner, M., William Sedley, 3:98
  - Smith, T., Shepherd's Son,
      1:324-325
  — Tales for Youth, 2:188

    Watts, "Advice to a Young

      Man," 5:50-51
  - West, Letters Addressed to a
      Young Man, 1:76-77
Branch, John, British Museum,
  2:495-497
Breastfeeding, 1:178-179, 181
Brewer, George: Life of Rolla, 2:498;
  review: (Newbery, 1800), 2:189-
  192; Siamese Tales (Newbery,
  1796), 2:497-498
Brief Commentaries (Galloway),
  1:81-84
Brief Compendium of Juvenile In-
 struction (Wilson), 4:104-105
British Museum (Holloway), 2:495-
```

497

Brothers, 1:361-368, 3:339, 5:159-160. See also Family

Brothers, Author of. See Smythies, Miss

Brown, Dr. (vicar of Newcastle), Sermons (Davis, 1768), 1:375-376

Bull, George (bishop of St. David's), 3:119n, 211n, 4:48n, 52n, 150n Bunyan, John, 1:92, 4:159

Bunyano, Don Stephano, *Prettiest Book for Children* (York: Wilson & Spence), 1:437

Burckhart, J. G., System of Divinity for the Use of Schools and for the Instruction of Youth in Essential Principles and Duties of Religion (Robinsons, 1797), 2:227-235

Bureau Typographique (educational toy), 2:19-20. See also Play

Burges, Mary Anne, Progress of the Pilgrim Good Intent in Jacobinical Times (Hatchard, 1800), 1:91-99, 158-162

Burgess, Thomas (bishop of Salisbury), First Principles of Christian Knowledge. 2nd ed. (Rivingtons, 1804), 4:61-63

Burgh, N., Attempt to Adapt Sacred History to the Capacities of Children (Rivingtons), 5:53-54

Burke, Edmund, 1:74-75

Burnet, Gilbert, "Repentance and Happy Death of the Celebrated Earl of Rochester," (RTS, no. VI), 4:158

Burton, John, Lectures on Female Education and Manners. 2 v. (1793), 3:351-356

Butler, William, Arithmetical Questions on a New Plan (Dilly), 4:101-104

C

C., C. See Cappe, Catherine

C., M. H., correspondent: "Letter Written by John Lee, Formerly Parkkeeper to the Earl of Dysart," 3:395-400; "Prayer to Be Used by the Committee of the Ladies' School in St. Sepulchre's Parish, London," 3:304

C., W., Epitome of Sacred History for Children (Darton & Harvey), 1:125-127

Caesars: Augustus, 4:385, 390, 393; Julius, 5:416; Nero, 4:387-388. See also Monarchy

Calcott, "Sermon on Proverbs, xiv.32," 2:511-517

Calvinism: 2:59-64, 4:160, 5:48-50; predestination, 1:344-347, 408-411, 521-523; reprobation, 2:466-467

Cameron, Lucy, *History of Margaret Whyte* (Vernor & Hood, 1799), 1:392-393

Campbell, John, Worlds Displayed for the Benefit of Young Persons (Williams, 1802), 2:106-111

Campe, Joachim H., New Robinson Crusoe (Stockdale, 1789), 3:356-360; Tales and Colloquial Extracts for the Amusement and Improvement of the Mind (Hookham, 1789), 3:360-372

Cappe, Catherine, Observations on Charity Schools and Female Friendly Societies (Hatchard, 1805), 4:201-205

— "Statement of the Subscription to Charlotte Richardson's Poems," 5:427-428 — "Subscription for the Author Charlotte Richardson," 4: 433-436

Cards. See Playing Cards

Catechisms: 1:12, 2:331-342, 3:276-277; Bishop Burgess's, 3:99-105; Church of England's, 1:4, 2:25, 89, 152-159, 469-478; education and, 1:3-4, 11-12, 2:22-25, 3:280, 5:1-23; memorization of, 2:25, 89, 4:401; Sandford's, 5:250-262; Sabbath observance and, 2:331-342; value of, 1:111, 2:279-280, 5:4-5, 65-66; reviews: *Doctrine of the Old and New Testaments*, 4:400-402. See also Education, instructional methods

Celtic Researches (Davies), 3:323-335

Censorship. See Books, censorship of

Chapone, Hester: 3:255; Letters on the Improvement of the Mind. New ed. (Scatcherd), 1:330-333

Charaeter: boy, of a, 5:410-416; Christian, of a, 2:511-517; father, of a, 4:205-208; gamekeeper, of a, 3:395-396; gentleman, of a, 3:242-251, 5:42-44; girl, of a, 1:447-449, 5:136-137; Haller, of, 1:466-470; lady, of a, 5:138-139; mother, of a, 5:410-416; school-mistress, of a, 5:185-186; reviews: Genlis, *La Bruyère the Less*, 1:443-449

- Kilner, M., Sacred Exhibition, 1:450-455
- Painter, *Picture Room*, 1:500-502
- Playful, *Take Your Choice*, 1:197-198

Charity: 1:347-348, 2:247, 395, 3:163-164, 4:61-63, 5:266-269; charity schools, 1:8n, 4:201-205, 370-382, 5:2n, 185

Charles I (king of England), 5:522-523. See also Monarchy

Chastity, 1:495-496

Chemistry, 1:455-456, 2:35, 310, 408. See also Science

Chesterfield, Lord: 2:320, 3:90, 255; *Letters to His Son*, 1:444, review: 4 v., 2:425

Children: anecdotes about, 1:108, 109, 2:15-16, 27-28, 37-38, 151-152, 160-162, 3:298, 5:412, 415

— animals and, 1:424, 2:185, 4:422-423, 425

- appetites, moderation of, 1:105-106, 2:154-155, 293-302, 3:160-161, 266
- authority and, 2:32, 164-165
- books for, anti-Christian conspiracy and, 1:2-3, 64-65, 68-76, 244-264, 455-462, 2:100-106, 358, 364-371, 3:148-150, 359-372, 4:167-168, 461-462 censorship of, by mothers, 1:267, 372, 431, 506, 2:170, 184, 4:98-101, 5:93-94; by publishers, 1:442, 4:83; by the Society for Suppression of Vice, 2:127-128

history of, 1:61-66 illustrations for, 1:62, 381-391, 429, 2:23-24, 296-297, 485-486, 3:268, 362, 4:73, 74-75, 303, 304, 410, 428-429n, 5:284, 295-296, 412 Children (continued) picture books, 2:485 prices of, 2:183, 4:413 prefaces to, 4:94-95 recommended for, 1:8-12, 2:407-410 selection, guidelines for, 1:2, 2:407, 4:99 standards for, 1:124, 246, 2:354-355, 4:413 status of, 4:64 tracts as, 4:52 — capabilities of, 1:24-25, 175, 378, 2:28-29, 37-40, 90-92, 277, 3:361-362, 371-372, 378, 4:244-253, 358-370, 5:1-24 - care of, 1:293-296, 3:160-162, 257 — Christianity, comprehension of, 1:107-110, 175, 414-419, 2:91-92, 147-150, 5:11-12 — clothing for, 1:289-291 — compassion of, 1:424, 2:185, 4:422-423, 425 — confirmation of, 2:464-481, 4:46. — conscience of, 2:159, 241 — contests for, 1:316-317 — dark, fear of, 3:263-264 — death, effects upon, 1:392-393, 2:78, 4:396 fear of, 2:440, 4:79, 5:295 instruction about, 2:85-86 -defined, 1:65-66, 2:305 — discipline of, 1:354-362 praise, 1:317, 5:60-62, 409-410 rewards and punishments, 1:305, 355-360, 2:165-

168, 236, 242-243, 3:162-164, 266, 4:373-376, 5:59-62, 263-264 terror, 1:370-372 - duties of, 1:288-289, 347-374, 2:150-163, 186-188, 5:22-23 - education of. See Education - exercise, 3:257 - experiments on, 1:187, 2:299-302, 412-424, 3:96 - fears: dark, 3:263-264 death, 1:392-393, 2:78, 440, 4:79, 396 ghosts, 1:267, 371, 3:264, 4:78-79 Hett, 1:391-392, 520-521 physical harm, 3:264 - freedom, 1:377 - ghosts, fear of, 1:267, 371, 3:264, 4:78-79 — grace and, 1:103, 169, 348 - Hell, fear of, 1:391-392, 520-521 - imagination of, 1:107, 250, 2:220, 3:168, 4:74 — innocence of, 2:465-467, 3:203 — love, caretakers, for, 1:369-370 filial, 1:236-237, 297-298, 348-353, 357, 360, 411fraternal, 1:362-368, 3:339, 5:161-162 God, for, 1:412-420 — manners, 1:508, 2:437, 3:90, 170, 267, 5:32-33, 160-161 — money and, 5:266-271 — nature of, 3:274-277 - obedience, 1:30-31, 236-244,

353-362, 378-381, 418-419,

2:92-93

Children (continued)

- overstimulation of, 2:295,3:151-152, 5:175-176
- --- piety, 2:151-152, 160-162
- praise of, 1:317, 5:60-62, 409-410
- protection, 2:127-128
- reason, 2:37-38, 202-209, 214-219, 240-242,
- reasoning with, 1:355, 2:131-132,204-209, 214-217, 408-409,3:266, 363-372, 5:265-266
- rewarding and punishing, 1:305, 355-360, 2:165-168, 236, 242-243, 3:162-164, 266, 4:373-376, 5:59-62, 263-264
- self-control, 1:30-31, 2:92-93, 220-225
- servants and, 1:281-284, 2:41-42, 164, 358, 5:158
- spiritual condition, 1:169-183,234-235, 288-289, 520-521,2:464-469, 3:92, 274-277,4:107, 165-166, 271
- spoiling, 1:351, 5:154-157, 263-265
- -- teachers, as, 2:158-159, 344, 430, 3:158, 4:373-374, 378-379
- terrorizing, 1:370-372
- toys, 2:30-35, 344, 3:163, 257-259

board games, 3:257, 4:77 Bureau Typographique, 2:19-20

dolls, 2:33-34, 3:157-158, 169-170, 257, 4:413

playing cards, 1:301, 391n, 3:258-259

Sabbath observance and, 3:349-350

- teaching with, 1:62, 242-244, 421-422, 2:19-20, 49
- tracts, as reading for, 4:52
- writings by, 5:139-151, 243-250, 415-417
- Children, books for, reviews: "Address to Christians," 4:53-58
 - Adventures of Master Headstrong, 1:503-504
 - Aikin, J., Arts of Life, 1:118-119; Evenings at Home, 2:304-311, 343-353
 - Aikin, L., Poetry for Children, 1:307
 - "Anecdotes and Hints," 4:395
 - Anecdotes of a Little Family, 1:423
 - "Appeal to Christians," 5:164-165
 - Aulnoy, Mother Bunch's Fairy Tales, 2:185; Renowned History of the White Cat, 1:432
 - Barbauld, Hymns in Prose, 2:45-48; Lessons for Children, 2:43-45
 - Beautiful Page, 1:303-304
 - "Bible of Divine Authority," 4:395
 - Bisset, Geographical Guide, 4:75-77
 - Book of Games, 4:301-304
 - Book of Trades, 4:304
 - Bunyano, Prettiest Book for Children, 1:437
 - Burgess, First Principles of Christian Knowledge, 4:61-63
 - Burgh, Attempt to Adapt Sacred History, 5:53-54
 - Burnet, "Repentance and Happy Death of the Celebrated Earl of Rochester," 4:158

- Children, books for, reviews (continued)
 - C., W., Epitome of Sacred History, 1:125-127
 - Cameron, History of Margaret Whyte, 1:392-393
 - Campbell, Worlds Displayed, 2:106-111
 - "Children in the Wood," 1:432-433
 - Child's Delight, 1:505
 - Choice Collection, 1:511-512
 - "Consolations under Afflictions," 4:393-394
 - "Cottager's Religious Meditations," 2:371-373
 - Cowper, "John Gilpin," 1:432-433
 - Curiosities of London, 1:433, 5:54-55
 - Darton, *Chapters of Accidents*, 1:509
 - Devis, Miscellaneous Lessons, 2:489
 - "Dialogue between a Minister and Three Parishioners," 5:276-282
 - "Dialogue between Two Friends," 4:392-393
 - "Dialogue between Two Seamen," 5:271
 - Diatessarion, 1:509-511
 - Doctrine of the Old and New Testament, 4:400-402
 - Doddridge, "Life of Colonel James Gardiner," 4:295-296;
 "Principles of Christian Religion," 4:294-295
 - Dodsley, Chronicle, 2:68-76
 - E., H., Wonders of the Sea, 3:164-166

- Edgeworth, M., Frank, 2:240-245 Harry and Lucy, 2:175-182 Little Dog Trusty, 2:302-304 Parent's Assistant, 2:353-360, 415-418 Rosamond, 2:235-239
- Entertaining Instructions, 4:187-189
- Evening Recreations, 1:437
- Fenn, Cobwebs to Catch Flies, 1:124-125

Family Miscellany, 5:56-57
Friend of Mothers, 2:49
Infant's Friend, 2:48
Rational Dame, 1:200
Systematical Arrangement of
the Animal Kingdom,
4:171-172

- Fenwick, Mary and Her Cat, 4:412-413
 Presents for Good Boys, 4:413
 Presents for Good Girls, 4:413
- "Few Minutes Conversation," 4:396
- First Elements of Astronomy, 4:169-171
- Fisherman, 1:437
- Frend, Evening Amusements, 3:96-97
- "Friendly Hints," 4:159
- G., II., Poor Child's Friend, 2:50
- Garden Amusements, 4:172-173
- Geographical Companion, 2:489
- Godwin, Bible Stories, 1:244-264

Fables Ancient and Modern, 5:282-296 Sacred Histories, 3:372-375

- Children, books for, reviews (continued)
 - -- "Good Old Way," 4:395
 - Governess, 2:488-489
 - Grandmother's Stories, 1:306
 - Grant, Manual of Religious Knowledge, 5:57-66
 - Gulliver, Instructive Lessons, 1:508
 - Guppy, Instructive and Entertaining Dialogues, 3:375-376
 - Happy Family, 2:363
 - Helme, History of England, 4:63-73; History of Scotland, 5:417-420
 - Hill, *Instructions for Children*, 1:391-392
 - History of a School-Boy, 1:434-435
 - History of Jack, 1:426-427
 - History of Little Goody Two-Shoes, 1:430-431
 - History of Little King Skilful, 1:504
 - History of Master Jackey, 1:505
 - "History of Mrs. Wilkins," 5:272-276
 - History of Prince Lee Boo, 1:299-300
 - Hurry, Faithful Contrast, 4:74; Rational Amusement, 4:73
 - "Importance of Speaking Truth," 5:163-164
 - Instructive Tales, Author of, Silver Thimble, 2:184
 - Jauffret, Little Hermitage, 1:119-122 Tales, 4:185-186 Visits to the Menagerie, 1:201-202

- Jenner, Fortune's Football, 5:420-422
- Johnson, R., Adventures of a Silver Penny, 1:428 Foundling, 1:504 Juvenile Rambles, 1:508-509 Rural Felicity, 1:506-507 Tea-Table Dialogues, 1:308 Toy-Shop, 2:183-184 Youthful Jester, 1:507-508
- Jones, S., Life and Adventures of a Fly, 2:184-185; Oracles, 1:507
- Jones, Rev. W., *Book of Nature*, 3:273-283
- Joyce, Scientific Dialogues, 1:306-307
- Juvenile Mirror, 4:186
- Juvenile Stories and Dialogues, 1:502-503
- Kendall, Adventures of Musul,
 1:425
 Crested Wren, 1:299
 Sparrow, 1:423-424
 Stories of Senex, 1:425
- Kilner, D., Dialogues and Letters, 3:98

Doll's Spelling Book, 2:424
First Going to School, 4:412
Good Child's Delight, 1:123124

Histories of a Great Many Little Boys and Girls, 1:123-124

Histories of More Children than One, 1:123-124 Holiday Present, 1:123-124,

2:364

Life and Perambulation of a Mouse, 1:123-124, 435-436 Children, books for, reviews (continued)

Little Stories, 1:123-124 New Dialogues, 4:412 Rational Brutes, 1:309 Short Conversations, 1:123-124

Village School, 1:123-124

- Kilner, M., Adventures of a Pin-Cushion, 1:124, 436 Familiar Dialogues, 1:124 Jemima Placid, 1:124 Memoirs of a Peg-Top, 1:124 William Sedley, 3:98
- Ladder to Learning, 4:297-298
- Library for Youth, 1:309
- "Life and Sayings of Mr. Philip Henry," 4:296
- "Life of Mr. John Bunyan," 4:159
- Little Jack of All Trades, 5:55-56
- Little John, History of Little Dick, 1:434
- *Little Juba*, 1:298
- Margery, History of Young Edwin, 1:422-423
- Martin, Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard, 4:413-414
- Martin and James, 1:431-432
- "Most Important Truths and Duties of Christianity," 3:284
- Mother Shipton's Legacy, 1:430
- Mrs. Norton's Story Book, 2:363
- Murray, Abridgment of Lindley Murray's Grammar, 2:419
 English Exercises, 2:419
 English Grammar, 2:418-419
 English Reader, 2:419-423

- First Book for Children, 4:189-190
- Museum for Young Gentlemen and Ladies, 2:183
- Neale, Amusement Hall, 2:487
- New Game of Emulation, 4:77
- New Hieroglyphical Bible, 1:381-391
- Nursery Tales, 4:74-75
- Oakman, Moral Songs, 2:245-246
- "On the Lord's Day," 4:160
- Painter, *Picture Room*, 1:500-502
- Palace of Enchantment, 4:94-95
- Paltock, Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins, 1:432
- Peacock, Little Emigrant, 1:198; Six Princesses of Babylon, 4:173
- "Pentitent Prostitute," 5:163
- Perrault, Histories and Tales of Past Times, 2:185-186
- "Persuasive to Public Worship," 4:160-166
- Pilkington, Asiatic Princess, 1:425 Edward Barnard, 1:198 Marvelous Adventures,
 - 1:303
 Tales of the Cottage, 1:302-303
 - Tales of the Hermitage, 1:123
- Playful, *Take Your Choice*, 1:197-198
- Plumptre, A., Stories for Children, 3:168-170
- Polite Academy, 2:113-114
- Pratt, Paternal Present, 1:306; Pity's Gift, 1:304-306

- Children, books for, reviews (continued)
 - "Prayers for Children," 2:245
 - --- Pretty Pilgrim, 3:167
 - Prize of Youthful Obedience, 2:485-487
 - Puzzling Cap, 1:506
 - "Remember the Sabbath Day," 4:158
 - Renowned History of Primrose Pretty Face, 1:436
 - Reynolds, "Subjects for Consideration," 4:157
 - Roberts, E., Geography and History, 2:490
 - Roberts, M., Telescope, 4:82-83
 - Robin Goodfellow, 1:504
 - S., E., Cup of Sweets, 3:166; Gertrude, 3:166-167
 - Sanders, Edmund, 1:125
 - Sandham, Addresses of an Affectionate Mother, 2:423-424; Trifles, 1:427-428
 - "Season of Scarcity," 4:296
 - "Short Narrative of...King Charles II," 5:422-423
 - "Short Prayers for Every Evening," 5:53
 - "Short Prayers for Every Morning," 5:51-53
 - "Sixteen Short Sermons," 5:51
 - Smith, C., Conversations Introducing Poetry, 4:177-185, 299-301
 - Smythies, History of a Pin, 1:423
 - "Solemn Questions," 5:48-50
 - Somerville, Birthday, 1:301 Flora, 2:182-183 Leading Strings, 5:297 Mabel Woodbine, 1:300

- New Children in the Wood, 1:300-301
- Preludes to Knowledge, 4:166-169
- Sacred Lectures, 3:268-273 Village Maid, 2:424
- Songsters of the Grove, 1:505
- Sunday Miscellany, 3:167-168
- "Sunday's Excursion," 4:394
- Tagg, Collection of Pretty Poems, 1:428-429
- Tales of the Arbour, 1:198-200
- Taylor, A. and J., *Original Poems*, 4:77-82, 410-412
- "Three Queries to a Deist," 5:163
- Thumb, Bag of Nuts, 1:504
- "To a Prisoner," 4:159
- "To a Youth," 4:158
- "To a Youth at School," 4:296
- "To the Afflicted," 4:297
- "To the Spectator of a Funeral," 5:272
- "To the Unfortunate Female," 4:159
- Trifles for Children, 1:429-430
- Trimmer, M., History of Quadrupeds, 3:284
- Tripp, *Pretty Book of Pictures*, 1:432
- Triumph of Good Nature, 1:428
- Truelove, Adventures of a Silver Three-Pence, 1:505
- "Two Dialogues between a Corporal and a Private Soldier," 5:272
- Valentine and Orson, 4:75
- Ventum, Juvenile Instruction, 1:512-513
- Virtue in a Cottage, 1:435

- Children, books for, reviews (continued)
 - Vivian, "Three Dialogues," 4: 156-157
 - W., S., Puzzle for a Curious Girl, 2:112-113 Visit to a Farmhouse, 3:376-377

Visit to London, 4:173-177

- Wakefield, Domestic Recreation, 4:402-410
 Family Tour, 3:283-284
 Juvenile Anecdotes, 1:266-267
 Leisure Hours, 1:264-265
 Mental Improvement, 1:265-266
- "Warning Voice," 5:165-167
- Watts, "Advice to a Young Man," 5:50-51
 Divine Songs, 4:158
 "End of Time," 4:158
 "Golden Rule," 4:159
 Hymns and Moral Songs, 2:360-363
- West, Sorrows of Selfishness, 1:66-67
- Wilkinson, Sermons, 1:512
- Wilmshurst, Progressive Instructions, 2:114-116; Pronouncing Spelling Book, 2:116
- Winlove, Collection of Entertaining Stories, 2:47; Pleasing Moralist, 1:433-434
- Wisdom in Miniature, 1:499-500
- "Word of Advice," 4:395-396
- Wynne, Amusing and Instructive Tales, 1:425
- Youth's Monitor, 1:123

- Ziengenhert, Epitome of History of England, 1:301-302.
 See also Adolescents; Infants
- "Children in the Wood," 1:301, 3:388; review: 1:432-433
- Children's Friend (Berquin), 1:319, 2:436-446
- Child's Delight; or, Mirth and Morality (York: Wilson & Spence), 1:505 Child's Grammar (Fenn) 2:26n, 4:199
- Choice Collection of Hymns and Moral Songs...to Which Are Added Specimens of Divine Poetry (Newcastle: Saint), 1:511-512
- Christian, Theophilus (pseud.). See Owen, John
- Christian Guide (Plumbtre, C.), 3:186-187
- Christianity: 3:113-115, 228-229, 3:277-281, 4:343-357
 - appeal of, 2:144-146
 - Bible and. See Bible
 - Calvinism, 2:59-64, 4:160; predestination, 1:344-347, 408-411, 521-523; reprobation, 2:466-467
 - charity: 1:347-348, 2:247, 395,3:163-164, 4:62-63, 5:266-269; charity schools, 1:8n,4:201-205, 370-382, 5:2n,185
 - Church, establishment of, 3:209-229
 - conformity, 2:135-140, 4:62-63
 - conspiracy against, 1:2-3, 9-10, 17-21, 145-152, 209-223, 273-279, 2:189-192, 483-484, 3:148-150, 5:3-4, 5:220-221

Christianity (continued) — covenant, of grace, 5:108-117 instruction about, 1:179-180, 2:88-89 works of, 3:305-323, 4:1-17 - defense of orthodox, by Deluc, 1:21-27, 2:140-150, 197-211, 272-282, 324-331, 395-398, 462-464, 4:244-253, 258-270, 5:1-24 by Jones, Rev. J., 1:163-168, 223-232 by Daubeny, 1:219-223 by Trimmer, 1:256-272, 449-464, 479-481, 3:1-82, 112-147, 209-236, 306-385, 4:1-52, 112-155, 209-228, 312-370, 5:25-42, 117-135, 152-153 — devotion: 3:180-182, 378-383 exercises, 5:136-151, 243-250 hymns, 1:110 meditation, 5:407-408 piety: adolescents and, 2: 382-384, 5:138-151; children and, 2:151-152, 161-162; decline during Restoration, 1:6-7, 5: 423, 382-384; women and, 2:511-517 prayers, 1:5, 9, 110, 241, 417-420, 2:89-90, 151-152, 155, 158-159, 3:180-185, 359-360, 5:132-135 Sabbath observance: 3:204-207, 315-316, 329, 348-353, 4:160-165, 394, 5:48-50; children and,

1:411-422, 2:342, 3:348-

```
353; decline of, 1:7; music and, 3:109-112; reading for, 2:125-127, 347-350, 3:88-90
```

- education and. See Education,
 Christian
- -- enthusiasm, 1:226-227, 497, 3:135-136, 399, 4:40-52, 139
- evangelicalism, 1:382, 511, 512,521-522, 4:52-53, 5:423
- faith: 2:146-147
 adolescents and, 5:136-161, 412-425
 children and, 1:108, 109, 2:15-16, 151-152, 160-162
 confession of, 2:232-235
 defined, 1:483-486
 instruction in, 1:60-61, 482-490, 2:13-16, 3:113-114
 undermining, 4:196-199
- grace, and, 1:479-481
 children and, 1:103, 169, 348
 covenant of, 3:213-214, 222
 regeneration of, 4:312-314, 5:165-166
- heresies, 1:162-168
- history and, 4:363-367
- Holy Ghost, 1:173-174, 482, 2:87, 388
- idolatry, 3:132-139, 175-176
- iniquity, mystery of, 1:164-169, 3:113-139, 232-236, 4:23-24, 5:211-235
- Jesus Christ, instruction about, 2:85-88 as Messiah, 4:313-340, 5:110-117, 193-203, 251-262 miracles of, 5:67-69, 257-

262

- Christianity (continued)
 - new Covenant and, 5:108-117
 - prophecies of, 5:193-205 types of, 4:113-141, 209-227
 - latitudinarianism, 1:227-228
 - Methodism, 1:229-230
 - miracles, 5:67-69, 257-262
 - morality and, 2:396-398
 - mysteries of, 1:164-168, 3:31, 3:113-139, 232-236, 4:23-24, 5:211-235, 305-399
 - prophecies and prophets: Daniel,
 3:67-68, 4:331-332, 5:103-107
 Jesus, 4:314-340, 5:107-117,
 251-262
 Moses, 4:26-31
 Revelations, 5:305-399
 Samuel, 4:209-217
 symbolic language of, 5:117-
 - Providence, 1:328-330, 426-427, 2:185, 488-489; national, 2:292-293, 5:98-103
 - Revelation, 3:229-233
 - Sabbath observance. See under Christianity, devotion, Sabbath observance.
 - sacraments, 1:34-39, 169-183,
 326-327, 337-344, 401-407,
 470-479, 482-490, 2:82-83,
 464-481, 3:202-203, 4:156-157, 165, 392-393, 397-400,
 5:52-53, 165-167, 273-283
 - sacrifices, 2:317-319, 3:122, 130, 233-236, 312-315, 4:11-13
 - Satan, 3:1-82, 113-139, 209-229, 4:328-331
 - sin: children and, 1:169-183, 234-235, 288-289, 520-522,

- 2:464-469, 3:92, 4:107; original, 4:165-166, 271
- soul, 2:117-118, 385-386, 3:364-372, 396-400, 5:35-36; instruction about, 2:83, 215-219; transmigration of, 2: 309
- toleration, 2:234-235, 361-362, 394-395, 4:194
- Trinity, 3:141-147, 4:144-153, 237-244
- typology, 4:1-31, 113-141, 209-227
 Christianity Not Founded in Argument (1742), 2:135-140
- Christmas Fireside (Wheatley), 5:167-180
- Christmas Tales (Lane, 1799), 3:383-389
- Chronicles of the Kings of England (Dodsley), 1:68-76, 109, 455n
- Church of England: *Book of Common Prayer*, 1:5
 - Catechism, 2:25, 89, 152-159, 469-478
 - conformity, 4:62-63
 - education, role in, 1:3-18, 149, 2:173-174, 229-230
- Cinderella: popularity, 1:143; unsuitable for children, 2:448; review: 4:74-75
- Circle of Sciences Consecrated by the Cross (Williams), 5:423
- Circulating libraries, 1:63
- Clarendon, Lord. See Hyde, Edward, Lord Clarendon
- Clarke, Hewson, *Literary Leisure*, 1:141-144
- Clarke, Samuel, Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God, 5:143

- Cleaver, William (bishop of Bangor), "Sermon on a Discourse of Our Lord in the Sixth Chapter of St. John's Gospel Preached before the University of Oxford, on Sunday, November 25, 1787," 1:401-407
 - "Sermon on the Privileges Annexed to the Lord's Supper... Preached before the University of Oxford, on the 28th of October 1790," 1:470-479
 - "Sermon on the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper Preached before the University of Oxford, on Sunday, November 25, 1787," 1:337-344
- Clericus, correspondent, "Exemplary Character of a Mother and Son," 5:410-417; "White's Diatessarion," 1:525-526
- Clothing: children's, 1:289-291; servants', 3:297, 4:203-205; women's, 1:268, 500, 2:403-406, 3:296-297, 4:90, 203-205
- Cobwebs to Catch Flies (Fenn), 1:124-125
- Collection of the Most Approved Entertaining Stories (Winlove), 2:49
- Collection of Pretty Poems (Tagg), 1:428-429
- Collection of Songs (Plumptre), 4:414-416
- Collet, John, Sacred Dramas (Longman, 1805), 5:297-299
- Collins, Anthony (English deist), 2:71-72
- Columbia College, New York, 4:155. See also Schools
- Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard (Martin), 4:413-414

- Commentary on the Book of Psalms (Horne), 3:178-179, 4:228-236
- Communion: see Holy Communion "Concerning Novels," (Philobiblios, correspondent), 5:426-427
- Conduct, reviews: Addresses to a Young Lady, 3:200-208
 - Aikin, Letters from a Father, 2: 373-377; Letters to a Young Lady, 3:285-294
 - Bowdler, Jane, *Poems and Essays*, 3:198-199
 - Bowles, Remarks on Modern Female Manners, 1:513-514
 - Dodsley, Economy of Human Life, 1:455-461
 - Gisborne, *Enquiry*, 3:335-342
 - Hale, Affectionate Epistles, 3: 377-383
 - Helme, *Maternal Instruction*, 2:56-59
 - Hunter, Letters from Mrs. Palmerstone, 5:82-88
 - Lambert, Mother's Advice, 1:320-323
 - Letters of Consolation and Advice, 3:189-195
 - Lewis, Essays on the Art of Being Happy, 3:199-200
 - Obsolete Ideas, 5:186-191
 - Pennington, Unfortunate Mother's Advice, 1:325-327
 - Polite Academy, 2:113-114
 - S., M., Letters, 5:425-426
 - Thoughts on Affectation, 5:300-304
 - Watts, "Advice to a Young Man," 5:50-51
 - West, Letters Addressed to a Young
 Man, 1:76-77. See also Manners

Confirmation: 2:464-481; review: Rees, Short and Practical Account of the Principal Duties of Christianity, 4:195. See also Sacraments Conscience, 2:159, 241, 327-328, 5:28-29

Consolation, 3:189-195

"Consolations under Afflictions. A Dialogue between a Pentitent and Her Christian Friend" (RTS, no. XXVI), 4:393-394

Constant Reader, correspondent, "Lines from Poems by the Late J. H. Beattie," 4:205-208

Contes des fées (Aulnoy), 1:142

Contests, 1:316-317, 2:125

Conversation: 2:42-43; instructional method, as an, 2:14-15, 44, 49, 82-89, 160, 331-343, 3:168, 363-371, 4:64-73, 175-183, 403-410, 5:167-180, 417-420. See also Education, instructional methods

Conversations Introducing Poetry (Smith, C.), 4:177-185, 299-301

Cook, Captain James, 5:81

Correspondents. See Guardian of Education, correspondents to

Corruption: of children, 2:92-93; of nations, 3:17-82

"Cottager's Religious Meditations," 4:60; review: (Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor; sold by Rivingtons and Hatchard), 2:371-373

Course of Lectures (Kilner, M.), 2:54, 5:88-93

Court, Jean, 1:211

Covenant: of grace, 5:108-117; teaching children about, 1:179-180, 2:88-89; of works, 3:305-323, 4:1-17

Coventry, Francis, *History of Pompey* the Little, 1:298

Cowan, Andrew, Anthropaeideia. 2 v. (Wynne & Scholey, 1803), 4:154-155

Cowley, Abraham, 5:425

Cowper, William, 1:278-279, 2:100n, 3:299-300, 4:173n; History of John Gilpin, a Droll Story, and The Ballad of the Children in The Wood (Glasgow: Lumsden and Son), 1:432-433

Crespigny, Mary Champion, Letters of Advice from a Mother to Her Son (Cadell & Davies, 1803), 3:84-90

Crested Wren (Kendall), 1:299
Creswick, Mr., teacher of elocution,
Lady's Preceptor; or, A Series of
Instructive and Pleasing Exercises
in Reading (Robinsons), 2:490-491

Croxall, Samuel, 5:282-288

Cup of Sweets (S., E.), 3:166

Curiosities of London and Westminster Described (Newbery), 1:433; (Harris, 1805), 5:54-55

D

Dancing, 2:254, 255, 401-402, 3:258, 350, 352. See also Accomplishments

Daniel, 3:67-68, 4:331-332, 5:103-107. See also Prophecy

Darton, William, First [Second and Third] Chapter of Accidents (Darton & Harvey, 1801), 1:509

Darwin, Erasmus, *Botanic Garden*, 2:432, 5:94, 425

Daubeny, Charles, Discourses on the Connection of the Old and New

Testament Considered as Two Parts of the Same Revelation, and Demonstrative of the Doctrines of Grace (Hatchard, 1802), 1:219-223, 3:115

Daughters, 3:336-342. See also Family

David (king of Judea), 4:217-222

Davies, Edward, Celtic Researches on the Origin, Traditions and Language of the Ancient Britons, with Some Introductory Sketches on Primitive Society (Printed for the Author and sold by J. Booth, 1804), 3:323-335

Day, Thomas, History of Sandford and Merton (Stockdale), 3:93-96

De Acton, Eugenia (pseud.). See Lewis, Alethea

Deaf mutes, 1:438-440. See also Handicapped

Death of Abel (Gessner), 1:203-207 Death: 2:82-86, 3:342-344; children, effects on, 2:440, 4:79, 396, 5:295-296; deathbeds, of a boy aged 14, 5:415; of a Christian, 5:40-42; of a deist, 5:38-39; of Gellert, 4:288-289; of a girl aged 18, 5:137; of Grey, Lady Jane, 1:91; of Hume, 2:3-13; of Roland, Mme, 1:88-90; of Toussaint, 4:253-256; of Voltaire, 2:382-384

Decalogue, 1:9, 2:155-158, 3:309-311, 4:359-360, 5:5-7

Deceit. See Lying

Definitions, Maxims, Proverbs and Precepts (Holland), 4:195-199

Defoe, Robinson Crusoe: 3:357; review: 3:297-300

Deism, 2:193-194, 196, 4:264-265, 368-370, 5:31

- allegory of, 1:160-161
- children's books and, 2:358, 3:359-360, 361-372, 4:167-168
- education and, 1:23-27, 2:136-137, 4:154-155
- history of, 2:65-73, 129-140
- morality and, 2:208-209, 338, 464, 5:31-42, 80-81
- Pope, Alexander, Essay on Man, 2:258-272, 320-324, 385-395, 449-454; "Universal Prayer," 2:454-461.

See also Freethinking

Deluc, Jean André: 4:245-246; Letters on the Religious Education of Infancy, 1:21-27, 414, 2:140-150, 197-211, 272-282, 324-331, 395-398, 411, 462-481; Letters on Christianity Addressed to M. Teller, 4:244-253, 4:358-370, 5:1-24

Devis, Ellen, Accidence; or, First Rudiments of English Grammar. 11th ed. (Law, 1803), 3:303; Miscellaneous Lessons (Law), 2:489

Devotion: 3:180-182, 378-383

- exercises, 5:136-151, 243-250
- hymns, 1:110
- meditation, 5:407-408
- piety: adolescents and, 2:382-384, 5:138-151
 children and, 2:151-152, 161-162
 decline during Restoration, 1:6-7, 5:423, 382-384

women and, 2:511-517

- prayers, 1:5, 9, 110, 241, 417-420; 2:89-90, 151-152, 155, 158-159, 3:180-185, 359-360, 5:132-135
- Sabbath observance, 3:204-207,

- 315-316, 329, 348-353, 4:160-165, 394, 5:48-50 children and, 1:411-422, 2:342, 3:348-353 decline of, 1:7 music and, 3:109-112 reading for, 2:125-127, 347-350, 3:88-90
- reviews: Familiar Instructions, 2: 53-54
- Kilner, M., Course of Lectures,2:54, 5:88-93
- "On the Lord's Day," 4:160
- "Persuasive to Public Worship," 4:160-166
- "Prayers for Children," 2:245
- "Remember the Sabbath Day," 4:158
- Sacred Hours, 3:179-185
- Sandham, Addresses of an Affectionate Mother, 2:423-424
- "Short Prayers for Every Evening," 5:53
- "Short Prayers for Every Morning," 5:51-53
- Somerville, Sacred Lectures, 3:268-273
- Sunday Miscellany, 3:167-168
- Watts, Hymns and Moral Songs, 2:360-363
- Welbeloved, *Devotional Exercises*, 5:79-81
- Devotional Exercises (Welbeloved), 5:79-81
- "Dialogue between a Minister and Three Parishioners, Taylor, Simpson and Johnson" (Bath: Hazard and Bins), 5:276-282
- "Dialogue between Two Friends on Regeneration" (RTS, no. XXV), 4:392-393

- "Dialogue between Two Seamen after a Storm" (RTS, no. XLVI), 5:271
- "Dialogue on Education" (Hyde), 1:191
- "Dialogue on the Respect Due to Age" (Hyde), 1:153-158
- Dialogues: 1:63-64, 2:363-371; reviews: *Book of Games*, 4:304-304
 - "Dialogue between a Minister," 5:276-282
 - "Dialogue between Two Friends," 4:392-393
 - "Dialogue between Two Seamen," 5:271
 - Entertaining Instructions, 4:187-189
 - Evening Recreations, 1:437
 - Fanshawe, Easter Holidays, 2:494-495
 - Fenn, Cobwebs to Catch Flies, 1:124-125
 - Friendly Instructor, 2:432-433
 - Gleaner, 3:383-389
 - Gulliver, Instructive Lessons, 1:508
 - Guppy, Instructive and Entertaining Dialogues, 3:375-376
 - *Hamlain*, Author of, *Moralist*, 1:315-316
 - Helme, History of England, 4:63-73
 - History of Scotland, 5:417-420
 - Instructive Rambles, 1:133-134
 - Maternal Instruction, 2:56-59
 - Hurry, Tales, 2:491-492
 - Jauffret, Visits to the Menagerie, 1:201-202

- Johnson, R., Tea-Table Dialogues, 1:308
- Joyce, Scientific Dialogues, 1:306-307
- Juvenile Stories and Dialogues, 1:502-503
- Kilner, D., *Dialogues*, 3:98; *New Dialogues*, 4:412
- Kilner, M., Familiar Dialogues, 1:124
- Pinchard, *Dramatic Dialogues*, 2:446-447
- Rational Dialogues, 3:383-389
- Sanders, Holidays at Home, 4:89-90
- Sandham, *More Trifles*, 4:84-89; *Trifles*, 1:427-428
- Smith, Conversations Introducing Poetry, 4:177-185, 299-301 Rambles Further, 2:381 Rural Walks, 2:381
- Somerville, Birthday, 1:301
- "Two Dialogues," 5:272
- Vivian, "Three Dialogues," 4: 156-157
- Wakefield, Domestic Recreation, 4:402-410
 Leisure Hours, 1:264-265
 Mental Improvement, 1:265-266
- Wheatley, *Christmas Fireside*, 5:167-180

See also Conversation; Dramas; Education, instructional methods Diaries, 5:139-151, 243-250

Diaries, 5:139-151, 243-250
Diatessarion: 1:525-526, 2:342n; reviews: Diatessarion: The History of Our Lord Jesus Christ Compiled from the Four Gospels...by the Rev. J. Thirwall (Spragg, 1803), 3:188-189—Diatessarion Sed Integra Historia

Domini Nostri Jesu Christ... Opera et Studio J. Thirwall (Rivingtons), 1:509-511

Dick the Little Poney, Author of, Dog of Knowledge; or, Memoirs of Bob the Spotted Terrier (Harris, 1801), 1:327-330

Diderot, Denis: anti-Christian conspiracy and, 1:9-10, 145-149, 2:194-196; *Encyclopédie* and, 1:211-214. See also Freethinking Diet, 1:293, 295-296, 3:160-161

Discourses on the Connection of the Old and New Testament (Daubeny), 1:219-223, 3:115

Disquisition on the Mosaic Distinction of Animals (Jones, Rev. W.), 4:31-40, 141-144

Dissertation Concerning the Theology of Hindostan (Maurice), 3:117-118, 139-147

Dissertation on the Prophecies (Faber), 5:105n, 117-128

Divine Songs (Watts), 1:511, 2:90, 152, 289n, 4:158

Doctrine of the Old and New Testament, by Way of Question and Answer, Subjoined to, and Reprinted, from the Edition of the Bible, Published in 1640 (Rivington, 1795), 4:400-402

Doddridge, Philip, "Life of Colonel James Gardiner" (RTS, no. XVII), 4:295-296; "Principles of the Christian Religion Expressed in Plain and Easy Verse" (RTS, no. XVI), 4:294-295

Dodsley, Robert, Chronicle of the Kings of England, 1:109, 455n; review: (Vernor & Ilood, 1799), 1:68-76

- Economy of Human Life, 1:62, 3:394; review: 1:455-461
- Miller of Mansfield, 1:506

Dog of Knowledge (Dick the Little Poney, Author of), 1:327-330

Dogs, 1:328-330, 397, 2:485-486, 496-497, 3:274

Doll's Spelling Book (Kilner, D.), 2:424

Dolls, 2:33-34, 429, 3:157-158, 169-170, 257, 4:413. See also Gender Differentiation; Play

Domestic Happiness Promoted (Hanway), 2:493-494

Domestic Recreation (Wakefield), 4:402-410

Dramatic Dialogues (Pinchard), 2:446-447

Drama: children's, 2:256, 380, 3:337, 4:89-90; education and, 2:500-507, 511; German, 1:79, 2:482, 484, 3:150; Harlequin, 1:144; immorality of, 4:428-430; Punch and Judy, 1:144; reviews: Berquin, *Children's Friend*, 2:436-446

- Christmas Tales, 3:383-389
- Collet, Sacred Dramas, 5:297-299
- Edgeworth, M., Parent's Assistant, 2:353-360, 415-418
- Genlis, Sacred Dramas, 2:500-507; Theatre of Education, 2:507-511
- I., P., Dramatic Pieces, 2:377-381
- Juvenile Tales, 3:383-389
- Mental Pleasures, 4:95-97
- More, Sacred Dramas, 2:498-501
- Sanders, Holidays at Home, 4:89-90

- Sandham, More Trifles, 4:84-89
- Summer Amusements, 3:383-389
- West, Poems and Plays, 4:308-312

See also Conversation; Dialogues Dramatic Pieces (I., P.), 2:377-381 Drawing: 2:403, 3:159, 350, 352; review: Galton, Natural History of Birds, 2:498. See also Accomplishments

Dreams, 2:246

Dress. See Clothing Dryden, 3:287, 5:149

Ducray-Duminil, Little Mountaineers of Auvergne; or, The Adventures of James and Georgette... Altered from the French (R. & L. Peacock; Vernor & Hood, 1801), 2:446

Duty: children's, 1:288-289, 347-374, 2:150-164, 186-188, 5:22-23; education, role in, 2:202, 432-433; fathers', 2:22-24; morality, role in, 5:32-33; mothers, of 1:169-183, 279-286, 2:75-76, 154-155, 163-164, 3:1-3, 113, 335-342, 5:152-162; masters and servants, of, 1:279-284, 2:42; parents, of, 1:27-34, 169-183, 348-349, 412-413, 2:76-78, 3:177-178; 5:265-266; women, of, 3:92-93

reviews: Creswick, Lady's Preceptor, 2:490-491

- Filial Duty, 2:186-188
- Friendly Instructor, 2:432-433
- Happy Family, 2:363
- Importance of Religion, 1:333-334
- "Most Important Truths and Duties of Christianity," 3:284

- Partridge, "On Reverence Due to Old Age," 2:249-250
- Rees, Short and Practical Account, 4:195
- Sermons on the Doctrines and Duties of Christianity, 2:125-127.

See also Authority; Love

E

E., H., *Natural History of the Earth* (Harris, 1802), 1:271-272; *Wonders of the Sea* (Harris, 1803), 3:164-166

E., N. See E., H.

Early Lessons (Edgeworth, M.), pts. 1-2 (Harry and Lucy), 2:175-182

- pts. 3-5 (Rosamond), 2:235-239
- -- pts. 6-9 (Frank), 2:240-245
- pt. 10 (Little Dog Trusty), 2:302-304

"Earnest Exhortation to a Frequent Reception of the Lord's Supper" (Hatchard, 1803), 3:106

Easter Holidays (Fanshawe), 2:494-495

Economy of Human Life (Dodsley), 1:62, 455-461, 3:394

Edgeworth, Maria, Early Lessons. See under individual titles following: Frank, Harry and Lucy, Little Dog Trusty, Rosamond

- Frank, in Four Parts (Early Lessons, pts. 6-9) (Johnson), 2:240-245
- Harry and Lucy, Part 1 and 2 (Early Lessons, pts. 1-2) (Johnson), 2:175-182

- Little Dog Trusty; The Orange Man; and The Cherry Orchard (Early Lessons, pt. 10) (Johnson, 1801), 2:302-304
- Moral Tales for Young People (Johnson, 1801), 2:425-432
- Parent's Assistant; or, Stories for Children (Johnson), 2:353-360, 415-418
- Rosamond, in 3 Parts (Early Lessons, pts. 3-6) (Johnson), 2:235-239

Edgeworth, Maria and Richard, *Practical Education*, influence of, 1:306, 2:341n, 5:158-160, recommended, 1:373-374, review: (Johnson, 1798), 1:490-498, 2:30-43, 92-101, 163-171. See also Edgeworth, Maria, *Early Lessons Edmund* (Sanders) 1:125

Education: accomplishments, 1:369, 2:254-255, 400-406, 429, 3:109-111, 159, 258, 343, 350-352, 4:414-416, 5:71-74, 160, 190

- --- amusement, 1:449, 2:18, 28, 293, 4:99, 413-414
- anti-Christian conspiracy. See under sub-entry books, children's: anti-Christian conspiracy
 - -arithmetic, 2:403, 5:269-271
- astronomy, 2:305-306
- --- Basedow, Johann Bernhard, 1:14-16, 2:141, 174, 3:363, 4:248
- books, children's: anti-Christian conspiracy and, 1:2-3, 64-65, 68-76, 244-264, 455-462, 2:100-106, 358, 364-371, 3:148-150, 359-372, 4:167-168, 461-462

Education (continued) censorship of, by mothers, 1:267, 372, 431, 506, 2:170, 184, 4:98-101, 5:93-94; by publishers, 1:442, 4:83; by the Society for Suppression of Vice, 2:127-128 effects, 1:391-392, 394-395, 430, 520-523 history of, 1:61-66 illustrations for, 1:62, 381-391, 429, 2:23-24, 296-297, 485-486, 3:268, 362, 4:73, 74-75, 303, 304, 410, 428-429n, 5:284, 295-296, 412 picture books, 2:485 prices of, 2:183, 4:413 prefaces to, 4:94-95 recommended, 1:8-12, 2:407-410 selection, guidelines for, 1:2, 2:407, 4:99 standards for, 1:124, 246, 2:354-355, 4:413 status of, 4:64 tracts as, 4:52 - botany, 2:305-306 — boys, of, 1:381, 461-464, 2:398-400, 494-495, 3:84 - chemistry, 1:455-456, 2:35, 310, 408 - Christian (Note on arrangement: book reviews on religious education follow subsub-entries): 1:49, 100, 276-277, 281-282, 325-331, 2:82-92, 140-150, 230, 295-298 adolescence, in, 3:1-82, 113-

139, 209-229, 305-323,

```
4:1-31, 113-141, 209-227,
  313-340, 5:97-117, 193-
  235, 305-399
baptism, 1:34-49, 169-183,
  482-490, 2:82-83, 4:156-
  157, 165, 392-393, 397-
  400, 5:52-53
benefits of, 2:295, 3:371-
  372, 5:23-25
Bible, role in, 2:292-294,
  5:1-24. See also Bible
catechisms, 1:3-4, 12, 111,
  2:22-25, 89, 152-159, 279-
  280, 282-283, 331-342,
  469-478, 3:99-105, 273-
  283, 4:401, 5:1-23, 65-66,
  250-262
confirmation, 2:464-481
devotion, 1:411-422, 2:151-
  152, 161-162, 348-353,
  382-384, 5:138-151
faith, instruction about,
  1:60-61, 482-490, 2:13-16,
  146-147, 3:113-114
God, instruction about,
  1:107, 412-420, 2:198-
  199, 3:373-375
heaven and hell, instruction
  about, 2:82-83, 88, 2:266-
  268, 362
history of, 1:3-16, 2:210-226,
  5:1-5
Holy Communion, 1:327,
  337-344, 401-407, 470-
  479, 2:464-481, 3:202-
  203, 4:156-157, 5:165-
  167, 273-282
instruction, readiness for,
  1:104-105, 2:13-16, 143-
  150, 200-202, 3:361-362
lower classes, of, 2:141-143
```

- Education (continued)
 - mysteries, instruction about 1:60, 492-494, 497-498, 3:113-114
 - reason versus revelation, 1:23-27, 2:277-282
 - books for, reviews: Bowdler, Elizabeth, *Practical Observa*tions, 3:195-197
 - Burgess, First Principles, 4:61-63
 - Burgh, Attempt to Adapt Sacred History, 5:53-54
 - C., W., Epitome of Sacred History, 1:125-127
 - Campbell, Worlds Displayed, 2:106-111
 - Diatessarion, 1:509-511, 3:188-189
 - "Earnest Exhortation," 3:106
 - Evans, Sketch of the Denominations, 2:229, 251-252
 - Florian, Select Fables, 5:423
 - Haller, *Letters*, 2:50-53
 - -Hamlain, Author of, Moralist, 1:315-316
 - Importance of Religion, 1:333-334
 - Jones, W., Book of Nature, 3:273-283
 - Kilner, M., Course of Lectures, 2:54, 5:88-93; Sacred Exhibition, 1:450-455
 - Macgowan, Life of Joseph, 2:120-125
 - "On the Lord's Day," 4:160

- Plain and Easy Introduction, 1:310-312
- Plumbtre, C., *Christian Guide*, 3:186-187
- Rees, Short and Practical Account, 4:195
- Watkins, Scripture Biography, 1:269-270
- West, Letters Addressed to a Young Man, 1:76-77
- See also Bible, historical books, children's versions
- Christianity, basis of, 1:35, 114-115, 490-498, 2:90-92, 341-342, 3:92-93
- classical, 2:226, 343, 393-410, 3:98-99, 5:416
- confidence, role in, 2:208, 3:267
- -- curriculum, 2:16-27, 82-90, 342
- drama, 2:256, 500-507, 511
- duty, 2:202, 432-433
- Edgeworth, Maria and Richard,1:306, 373-374, 490-498,2:30-43, 92-101, 163-171,341n, 5:158-160
- elocution, 2:420-422
- England, history of, 1:1-16, 61-66
- exercise, 3:257
- experience, 2:326-327, 412-415, 3:363
- experimental science, as, 1:491-492
- experiments, 1:187, 2:299-302, 412-414, 3:96
- families, of, 1:279-282
- fear and love, role in, 1:235-236, 2:28-29, 95, 197-198, 327-328
- Fénélon, 1:495, 2:196, 210-219, 227-228, 3:55, 4:305, 5:416n

Education (continued)

- France, in, 2:253-257; influence of, 1:153-158
- gender differentiation, 3:257,
 5:159-160
 dolls and, 2:33-34, 429, 169-170, 257, 4:413
 games and, 3:155-158, 258-289, 4:301-303
- geography, 1:207, 212, 271, 403
- geology, 1:271, 2:273
- governesses, 1:7, 368-370, 2:19, 213-214, 359, 416, 491-492, 3:107, 109
- grammar, 2:26
- gratitude, role in, 2:198-199
- habits: bad, 1:296, 354, 2:243
 good, 1:288-289, 2:201-202, 253, 358
 morality and, 1:375-376
 obedience and, 1:124, 2:94-98, 5:270-271
- Hyde, Edward, Lord Clarendon,
 "Dialogue on Education," 1:
 191; "Dialogue on the Respect Due to Age," 1:153-158
- instruction: 1:235-236, 243,
 2:158-159, 331-334, 344, 430;
 catechizing, 1:111, 2:22-24,
 89, 279-280, 4:401, 5:1-23,
 65-66
 conversation, 2:14-15, 44,
 - conversation, 2:14-15, 44, 49, 82-89, 160, 331-343, 3:168, 363-371, 4:64-73, 175-183, 403-410, 5:167-180, 417-420
 - memorization, 1:68, 111, 2:24, 289, 435-436, 3:151-155, 291, 362, 4:177-178 sequencing, 3:151-155, 3:361-362

- Socratic method, 2:214-219, 227-228, 3:363-371
- language acquisition, 1:239-243, 372
- Locke, John: 1:62, 299, 5:130;
 Thoughts Concerning Education, 1:8-9, 3:159-164, 263-267
- love, role in, 1:235-236, 2:28-29, 40-41, 95, 198-199, 202
- lower classes, of, 1:8, 2:171-175, 180, 4:201-205, 370-383, 5:2n, 185
- lying, role in, 3:151-152, 5:263-264
- memorization, 1:68, 111, 2:24, 289, 435-436, 3:151-155, 291, 362, 4:177-178
- modern, 1:6-8, 53, 112-115, 196, 461-464, 2:254-256, 4:64, 257-258, 427-431, 5:152-162, 267-292
- moral, 1:144-145, 2:203-209, 324-331, 395-398, 412-415, 3:107-108, 155-158, 177-178, 4:256-271
- natural history, 1:202
- nursery maids, 1:181-182, 190,232-233, 238, 241-242, 285-286, 370-372, 430, 2:35
- play: 1:355, 421-422, 2:36-39, 3:350, 4:77
 - amusement necessary, 1:449, 2:18, 28, 293, 4:99, 413-414
 - education, role in, 2:18-19, 28-29, 36-37, 3:155-158, 4:23, 301-303, 5:263-265 games, 1:301-302, 2:19-20, 435-436, 3:155-158, 258-259, 4:301-303

Education (continued)

- pleasure, role in, 2:90, 163-164
- private, 2:93, 199, 3:106-109, 5:413-416
- purpose, 1:173-174, 495, 2:163-
- Quintillian, 2:16-18, 21
- readiness for, 2:16-18, 28-29, 253
- religious. See Education, Christian
- Rollin, Charles, 1:495, 497-498,2:16-30, 90, 211-219, 293,407, 3:255, 4:277
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 1:120,
 138-141, 144, 182, 184-191,
 374-381, 2:330, 343, 3:94, 356357, 4:92-93, 369-370, 5:283-284
- schools: charity, 1:8n, 130-131,
 4:201-205, 370-382, 5:185
 Columbia College, New York, 4:155
 - deaf, for, 1:439-440n
 - failure to teach religion, 1:11-13, 113
 - Ladies' School of St. Sepulchre's Parish, London, 3:304
 - Male Asylum at Egmore, Madras, India, 4:371-382
 - philanthropines, 1:13-14, 16-17, 2:141n, 174, 4:248
 - public, 1:110-118, 192-197, 2:430
 - schoolbooks, 2:409, 3:301, 4:102-103
 - Sunday, 5:58-66
 - Williams' academy at Chelsea, 2:410-415
- science, role in, 1:441-442, 491-492, 2:35, 37-40, 225-226,

- 305-306, 407-408
- teachers, 1:5, 4:104-105, 5:3-4
 children as, 2:344, 3:158
 deaf-mutes, of, 1:438-440
 French, 1:6-7, 2:254-255
 Gellert, 4:279-280, 282-283
 governesses, 1:7, 7n, 368-370, 2:19, 213-214, 359, 416, 491-492, 3:107, 109
 - 4:373-377 public, and, 1:2, 2:279-

schools, Lancastrian, and,

- 280 village, and, 5:1-3
- siblings as, 2:430
- tutors, 1:186-188, 2:199, 4:373-374, 378-379
- women as, 5:185-186, 413-414
- textbooks. See Reading and readers, reviews
- toys, 2:30-35, 344, 3:163, 257-259
 - board games, 3:257, 4:77 Bureau Typographique, 2:19-20
 - dolls, 2:33-34, 3:157-158, 169-170, 257, 4:413
 - playing eards, 1:301, 391n, 3:258-259
 - Sabbath observance and, 3:349-351
 - teaching aids, as, 1:62, 242-244, 421-422, 2:19-20, 49
- treatises on, 1:53, 2:343, 3:254-256. See also Systems of Education
- women, of, 1:53-54, 2:256, 302, 3:259-263, 349-353, 4:201-205, 5:137, 185-186
- Edward Barnard (Pilkington), 1:198

Elegant Preceptor; or, An Introduction to the Knowledge of the World (Crosby, 1803), 2:55

Elements of Astronomy and Natural Philosophy with a Concise System of the Geography of Europe (Sael, 1795), 3:302

Elements of Natural Philosophy (Harris, 1805), 5:88

Elocution: 2:420-422; reviews: Creswick, Mr., Lady's Preceptor, 2:490-491; Murray, English Reader, 2:419-423. See also Reading

Emblems: 1:382-391, 2:19-20, 4:417; review: Wynne, *Amusing and Instructive Tales*, 1:425. See also Illustration

Embroidery, 3:352

Enchanted Mirror; A Moorish Romance. 2nd ed. (Salisbury: J. Easton; E. Newbery, 1800), 1: 440

Encyclopédie, 1:9-10, 82-84, 209-219, 244-245, 2:197, 4:253-256. See also Freethinking

"End of Time" (Watts), 4:158

Endeavour Society, 2:245, 4:61. See also Philanthropic Societies

English Exercises (Murray), 2:419

English Grammar (Murray), 2:419

English Parsing (Giles) 4:105

English Reader (Murray), 2:419-423 English Spelling Book (Murray),

4:200-201
Enquiry into the Duties of the Female

Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex (Gisborne), 3:335-342

Entertaining Instructions in a Series of Familiar Dialogues between a Parent and His Children; Interspersed with Original Fables (Hatchard, 1805), 4:187-189 Entertainment. See Amusement; Play

Enthusiasm, 1:226-227, 497, 3:135-136, 399, 4:40-52, 139

"Episode, in Which Is Described the Gradual Corruption of a Village Youth...from Addresses to a Young Lady on Her Entrance into Life," 3:236-242

Epitome of Sacred History for Children (C., W.), 1:125-127

Epitome of the History of England (Ziengenhert), 1:301-302

Essay on Christian Education (Trimmer, S.), 1:34-39, 99-106, 169-183, 232-244, 285-298, 347-374, 411-422, 482-490, 2:13-30, 82-92, 150-163, 210-226, 282-295, 331-342, 398-410, 464-481

Essay on Education (Barrow), 1:112-118, 192-197, 2:399

Essay on Man (Pope), 2:257-272, 321-324, 385-395, 423, 449-454, 4:199

Essay on the Beauties of the Universe, Selected from the Most Eminent Authors, Illustrated with Notes, Containing the Choicest Thoughts of the Best English Poets (Hurst, 1803), 3:170-176

Essay on the Happiness of the Life to Come (Villette), 5:235-243

Essays, reviews: Addison & Steele, Selections from the Spectator, 4:304-308

- Badger, Friendly Admonitions, 3:344-351
- Bonhote, Parental Monitor, 3:389-395
- Genlis, La Bruyère the Less, 1:443-449

- Kilner, M., Course of Lectures for Sunday Evenings, 2:54, 5:88-93
- Lewis, Essays on the Art of Being Happy, 3:199-200
- Mavor, Juvenile Olio, 2:434-436
- Painter, Picture Room, 1:500-502
- Thoughts on Affectation, 5:300-304
- Winlove, *Pleasing Moralist*, 1:433-434

See also Character; Letters

Evangelicalism, 1:382, 511, 512, 521-522, 4:52-53, 5:423

Evans, John, Sketch of the Denominations into Which the Christian World Is Divided. 7th ed. (Crosby, 1802), 2:229, 251-252

Evening Amusements (Frend), 3:96-97, 4:110-112

Evening Recreations; or, A Collection of Original Stories (J. Deighton, 1794), 1:437

Evenings at Home (Aikin, J. and A. Barbauld), 2:170, 175, 178, 304-311, 343-353, 382, 395n

Excursion from London to Dover (Gardiner), 5:425

Exemplars, 1:434, 502-503

- adolescents, 3:236-242
- aunts, 2:429-430
- -- children, 1:128-129, 2:176-182, 235-245, 350-356, 370-371, 415-416, 418, 424, 426-428, 3:94-96, 5:71-79, 82-88
- fathers, 3:357-359
- governesses, 2:416, 431-432, 488, 3:200-203
- lower classes, 3:357-358
- mothers, 2:493, 4:429, 5:71-72, 82-88
- parents, 2:508-510

Exemplars, negative, 1:434-435, 513

- adolescents, 2:426-428
- aristocrats, 1:429, 431, 4:301
- clergy, 1:429, 431, 2:184
- parents, 2:378-379, 3:385, 4:96, 194-195, 5:71-79
- professional men, 1:508
- schoolmasters, 1:435
- servants, 2:357
- soldiers, 3:95-96
- sons, 4:205-208
- tradesmen, 1:433

"Exemplary Character of R. H." (B., J. W. L., correspondent), 3:242-251, 5:42-44

"Exemplary Character of a Mother and Son" (Clericus, correspondent), 5:410-417

Exercise, 3:257

Experience, 1:235-236, 243, 2:326-327, 412-415, 3:363

Experiment in Education (Bell), 4:370-382

Extracts: B., J. W. L., correspondent, "Exemplary Character of R. H.," 3:242-251, 5:42-44; "Strictures on the Duties of Masters and Mistresses," 1:274-284

- Bates, *Rural Philosophy*, 5:128-135
- Burges, Progress of the Pilgrim Good Intent, 1:91-99, 158-162
- Cleaver, "Sermon on the Discourse of Our Lord," 1:401-407

"Sermon on the Privileges Annexed to the Lord's Supper," 1:470-479

"Sermon on the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper," 1:337-344

- Clericus, correspondent, "Exemplary Character of a Mother and Son," 5:410-417
- Daubeny, Discourses on the Connection of the Old and New Testament, 1:219-223
- Davies, Celtic Researches, 3:323-335
- Deluc, Letters on the Religious Education of Infancy, 2:140-150, 197-209, 272-282, 324-331, 395-398, 462-481
- "Episode, in Which Is Described the Gradual Corruption of a Village Youth," 3:236-242
- Faber, Dissertations on the Prophecies, 5:117-128
- Felltham, Resolves, 5:404-410
- Gellert, Life, 4:271-291; "On the Superiority of Morality, as Known in Our Days, over That of the Antient Philosophers," 4:341-347, 5:25-42
- Gisborne, Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex, 3:335-342
- Horne, Abstract, 4:228-236; "Letter to Adam Smith," 2:3-13
- Jones, Rev. W., Disquisition on the Mosaic Distinction, 4:31-40, 141-144
 - "Letter on the Church," 1:479-481
 - "Sermon on the Pleasures of Heavenly Mindedness," 5:400-404
 - Some Reasonable Cautions, 1:162-168, 223-232
 - "Two Letters to a Predestinarian," 1:344-347, 408-411

- Jones, Sir W., Primeval Religion of the Hindoos, 3:229-236
- K., F. E., correspondent, "From MS. Papers Found in the Writing-Desk of a Young Lady after Her Decease," 5:136-151
- Louis XVI, king of France, "Letter," 3:82-84
- M., A., correspondent, "Extracts from the Private Confession of Faith of a Christian," 5:243-250
- Maurice, Dissertation Concerning the Theology of Hindostan, 3:117-118, 139-147
- Nott, Sermons, 4:40-52
- Sandford, New Form of Catechistical Explanation, 5:250-262
- Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor, "Address to Ladies," 3:251-254
- Society for the Suppression of Vice, "Address to the Public," 3:148-150
- Villette, Essay on the Happiness of the Life to Come, 5:235-243
- Waterland, Abstract, 4:343-357;
 "On the Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity," 4: 144-153, 237-244
- West, Infidel Father, 2:74-82
- Willis, "Sermon on the Dutics of Parents," 1:27-34
- Wilmot, "Letter Written by Bishop Hough," 3:342-344

F

Faber, George Stanley, Dissertation on the Prophecies that Have Been

Fulfilled, Are Now Fulfilling, or Will Hereafter Be Fulfilled (Rivingtons), 5:117-128

Fables: 2:25-26, 408, 3:291, 307, 344, 4:187, 297-298, 417, 5:282-296

- Aesop's, 1:62, 4:297, 5:284
- Basedow's, 3:363
- --- defined, 5:282-283
- Dryden's, 3:287
- Gay's, 1:62, 2:351, 408, 3:291, 390, 5:424
- La Fontaine's, 1:150, 2:22, 24, 28 reviews: Aikin, *Evenings at Home*, 2:304-311, 343-353
- Anecdotes of a Little Family, 1:432
- Brewer, Life of Rolla, 2:189-192
- Devis, Miscellaneous Lessons, 2:489
- Entertaining Instructions, 4:187-189
- Florian, Select Fables, 5:423
- Godwin, Fables Ancient and Modern, 5:282-296
- Ladder to Learning, 4:297-298, 5:285
- Thumb, *Bag of Nuts*, 1:504
 Fairies, 1:246, 504. See also Ghosts
 Fairs: 4:396, 5:291; book fairs, 1:15
 Fairy tales: 1:62, 142-144, 432, 3:149, 265; children, effects on, 2:185-186, 4:74-75, 95
 - reviews: Aulnoy, Mother Bunch's Fairy Tales, 2:185; Renowned History of the White Cat, 1:432
 - Gulliver, *Instructive Lessons*, 1:508
 - Palace of Enchantment, 4:94-95
 - Perrault, Histories and Tales of Past Times, 2:185-186
 - Robin Goodfellow, 1:504
 - Winlove, Collection, 2:47

Faith: 2:146-147; adolescents and, 5:136-161, 412-425; children and, 1:108, 109, 2:15-16, 151-152, 160-162; confession of, 2:232-235; defined, 1:483-486; teaching, 1:60-61, 482-490, 2:13-16, 3:113-114; undermining, 4:196-199. See also Education, Christian

Faithful Contrast (Hurry), 4:74
Familiar Dialogues (Kilner, M.)
1:124

"Familiar Instructions for Young People, Relating to the Holy Festivals of the Church of England" (Spragg), 2:53-54

Familiar View of the Domestic Education of Children (Struve), 2:342-343

Family: daughters, 3:336-342

- fathers, 1:293-297, 361-362, 466-470, 2:22-24, 3:263, 357-359, 385, 4:191-193, 205-208, 5:42-44, 263, 411
- godparents, 1:37-48
- governesses, 1:7, 2:19, 213-214, 359, 491-492, 3:107, 109, 368-370
- -- marriage, 2:316-317, 369, 3:340-342, 5:187-191
- mothers. See Mothers
- nursery maids, 1:181-182, 190,232-233, 238, 241-242, 285-286, 370-372, 430, 2:35
- parents. See Parents
- --- servants, 1:281-284, 294, 2:41-42, 164, 357, 5:158
- siblings, 1:362-368, 2:430, 3:339, 5:159-160
- sons, 1:503, 2:83
- tutors, 1:186-188, 2:199, 4:373-374, 378-379

- Family Miscellany (Fenn), 5:56-57
 Family Tour (Wakefield), 3:283-284
 Fanshawe, Alethea, Easter Holidays;
 or, Domestic Conversations. 2nd
 ed. (Vernor and Hood), 2:494-495
 Fashionable World Displayed
 (Owen), 4:426-432
- Fasts and feasts: reviews: Familiar Instructions, 2:53-54; Sandham, Addresses of an Affectionate Mother, 2:423-424. See also Devotion

Father's Gift (Mayor), 4:190-194

- Fathers: characters of, 1:466-470, 4:205-208, 5:42-44, 411; children and, 1:293-297, 361-362, 3:263, 4:191-193, 5:263; duties of, 2:22-24; education, Christian, role in, 2:22-23; fiction, in, 3:357-359, 385. See also Parents
- Fear: 2:327-328; death, of, 2:440, 4:79, 5:295; education, role in, 2:95, 327-328; ghosts, of, 1:107, 267, 3:364, 4:78-79; God, of, 1:107; physical harm, of, 3:264
- Felltham, Owen, Resolves, Divine, Moral, and Political, a New Edition, Revised and Emended by James Cummin (Hatchard, 1806), 5:404-410
- Fénélon: 2:196; Instructions for the Education of a Daughter, 1:495, 2:210-219, 227-228, 3:55; Télémacque, 4:305, 5:416n
- Fenn, Lady Ellenor, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*. 2 v. (Marshall), 1:124-125
 - Child's Grammar, 2:26n; review: (Newbery), 4:199-200
 - Family Miscellany, in Prose and Verse (Harris, 1805), 5:56-57

- Friend of Mothers; Designed to Assist Them in Their Attempts to Instil the Rudiments of Language and Arithmetic (Newbery, 1799), 2:49
- Infant's Friend. Part II. Reading Lessons (Newbery, 1797), 2:48
- Mother's Grammar 2:26n; review: (Newbery, 1798), 4:199-200
- Mrs. Lovechild's Series of Grammatical Knowledge (Harris, 1804), 4:199-200
- Parsing Lessons, 2:26; review: (Newbery, 1798), 4:199-200
- Rational Dame (Marshall), 1:200
- Short History of Bees, with an Aenignatical Account of a Neighboring Nation (Newbery, 1800), 1:523-525
- Some Hints to Young Women Engaged in Rearing Infants or Educating Children; either in Private Families or Schools (Newbery, 1799), 1:514-515
- Systematical Arrangement of the Animal Kingdom, Designed to Supply a Pocket Volume for Those Who Visit Museums, and to Enable Ladies to Introduce Their Children to the Study of that Branch of Natural History (Harris, 1804), 4:171-172
- Fenwick, Eliza, Mary and Her Cat (Tabart), 4:412-413
 - Presents for Good Boys; or, The Toy Shop (Tabart, 1804), 4:413
 - Presents for Good Girls (Tabart, 1804), 4:413

```
"Few Minutes of Conversation at a Country Wake" (RTS, no. XXXII), 4:396
"Few Words to the Friends of the Poor" (West), 3:105-106
"Few Words on the Unreasonableness of Not Attending to the Christian Religion" (Spragg), 2:54
Fiction (Note on arrangement: sub-
```

- alphabetical sequence):

 abridgments, 2:433-434
- allegory, 1:91-99, 158-162, 2:111, 5:283-290

jects first in one alphabetical se-

quence; genre lists follow in one

- -- Arabian Nights, 1:142, 437
- -- children, effects on, 2:226 3:82, 166-167, 298-299, 362
- education and, 2:190-191, 3:296, 4:382-384, 5:426-427
- exemplars, 1:434, 502-503
 adolescents, 3:236-242
 aunts, 2:429-430
 children, 1:128-129, 2:176-182, 350-356, 370-371, 415-416, 418, 424, 426-428, 3:94-95, 5:71-79, 82-88
 - governesses, 2:416, 431-432, 488, 3:200-203 parents, 2:493, 508-510, 3:357-359, 4:429, 5:71-72, 82-88
- exemplars, negative, 1:513
 adolescents, 2:426-428
 aristocrats, 1:429, 431, 4:301
 clergy, 1:429, 431, 2:184
 parents, 2:378-379, 3:385, 4:96, 194-195, 5:71-79
 professional men, 1:508
 schoolmasters, 1:435

```
servants, 2:357
soldiers, 3:95-96
sons, 4:205-208
tradesmen, 1:433
```

- heaven and hell in, 2:106-111
- history in, 4:382-383
- Marmontel, 5:267
- morals and precepts in, 3:383-389, 5:52-88, 282-296, 424
- novels, 1:63, 513, 2:381, 3:82,
 395, 5:82, 426-427
 defined, 1:327-328
 Fielding, Henry, Joseph
 Andrews, 3:396; Tom
 - Jones, 2:100, 441 Goethe, Johann, Sorrows of Young Werther, 1:77-80,318 Montolicu, Caroline de Litchfield, 3:385
 - Moore, John, *Zeluco*, 2:432 Richardson, Samuel, 1:140, 3:387
 - Santillaine, *Gil Blas*, 2:100 Scripture history in, 1:203-207, 2:121-125, 210-226, 282-295, 498-507, 5:22, 297-299

Sterne, Laurence, 4:92

- romance, 1:246
- tales, exemplary, 2:408, 3:296
- truth in, 4:381-382
- book reviews: allegory: Adventures of Master Headstrong. 1:503-504 Anecdotes of a Little Family, 1:423
 - Bunyano, Prettiest Book for Children, 1:437
 - Campbell, Worlds Displayed, 2:106-111
 - Hunter, Letters from Mrs. Palmerstone, 5:82-88

Fiction (continued) Juvenile Library, 1:316-317 Kendall, Adventures of Musul, 1:425 Peacock, Six Princesses of Babylon, 4:173 - animal stories: Berquin, Children's Friend, 2:436-446 Hayley, Ballads, 4:416-426 Holloway, British Museum, 2:495-497 Pratt, Pity's Gift, 1:304-306 — autobiography, animal: Dick the Little Poney, Author of, Dog of Knowledge, 1:327-330 Grandmother's Stories, 1:306 Hare, 1:323 Jones, S., Life and Adventures of a Fly, 2:184-185 Kendall, Crested Wren, 1: 299; Keeper's Travels, 1:393-400; Sparrow, 1:423-424 Kilner, D., Life and Perambulation of a Mouse, 1:123-124, 435-436; Rational Brutes, 1:309 Little Juba, 1:298 Pilkington, Marvelous Adventures, 1:303 autobiography, inanimate objects: Instructive Tales, Author of, Silver Thimble, 2:184 Johnson, R., Adventures of a Silver Penny, 1:428 Kilner, M., Adventures of a Pin-Cushion, 1:124, 436;

Memoirs of a Peg-Top, 1:

Smythies, History of a Pin,

124, 436

1:423

Truelove, Adventures of a Silver Three-Pence, 1:505 - fables: Aikin, Evenings at Home, 2:304-311, 343-353 Anecdotes of a Little Family, 1:432 Brewer, Life of Rolla, 2:189-192 Devis, Miscellaneous Lessons, 2:489 Entertaining Instructions, 4:187-189 Florian, Select Fables, 5:423 Godwin, Fables Ancient and Modern, 5:282-296 Ladder to Learning, 4:297-298, 5:285 Thumb, Bag of Nuts, 1:504 - fairy tales: Aulnoy, Mother Bunch's Fairy Tales, 2:185; Renowned History of the White Cat, 1:432 Gulliver, Instructive Lessons, 1:508 Palace of Enchantment, 4:94-95 Perrault, Histories and Tales of Past Times, 2:185-186 Robin Goodfellow, 1:504 Winlove, Collection, 2: 479 — novels: Adventures of Kamoula, 1:319-320 Enchanted Mirror, 1:440 Genlis, Age of Chivalry, 2:433-444 Happy Family, 2:263 History of Jack and His Eleven Brothers, 1:426-427 History of Little King Skilful, 2:250-251

Beautiful Page, 1:303-304 Fiction (continued) Johnson, R., Foundling, 1:504 Berquin, Children's Friend, Julius, 1:438-439 2:436-446 Kotzebue, Guardian Angel, Cameron, History of Margaret Whyte, 1:392-393 1:317-318 Pilkington, Edward Barnard, Campe, Tales and Collo-1:198; Tales of the Herquial Extracts, 3:360-372 mitage, 1:123 Edgeworth, M., Frank 2: S., E., Gertrude, Agnes, 240-245; Harry and Lucy Melite and Amelia Doug-2:175-182; Little Dog Truslas, 3:166-167 ty, 2:302-304; Parent's As-Sanders, Edmund, 1:125 sistant, 2:353-360; Rosa-Sandham, Twin Sisters, 5:70-79 mond, 2:235-239 Smith, T., Shepherd's Son, Evening Recreations, 1:437 1:324-325 Fenwick, Mary and Her Cat, Somerville, New Children in 4:412-413 the Wood, 1:300-301 Fielding, Governess, 1:137-Ventum, Amiable Tutoress, 138 Filial Duty, 2:186-188 1:324 Fisherman, 1:437 - romances: Beautiful Page, 1:303-304 Gleaner, 3:383-389 Enchanted Mirror, 1:440 Grandmother's Stories, Valentine and Orson, 4:75 1:306 - school stories: Fielding, S., Gulliver, Instructive Les-Governess, 1:137-138 sons, 1:508 Governess; or, Evening Hamlain, 1:312-315 Amusements, 2:488-489 History of a School-Boy, History of a School-Boy, 1:434-435 1:434-435 History of Little King Skilful, History of Master Jackey, 1:504 1:505 Hurry, Tales, 2:491-492 Jauffret, Little Hermitage, 1: Johnson, R., Tea-Table Dialogues, 1:308 119-122; Tales, 4: 185-186 Johnson, R., Toy-Shop, 2: Kilner, D., First Going to 183-184 School, 4:412; Village School, 1:123-124 Juvenile Library, 1:316-317 Juvenile Mirror, 4:186 Tales of the Arbour, 1:198-200 - tales: Andrews, Manuscripts of Juvenile Stories, 1:502-503 Juvenile Tales, 3:383-389 Vertudeo, 1:127-128 Kendall, Stories of Senex, Anecdotes of a Little Family, 1:423 1:425

Fiction (continued) Kilner, D., Histories of a Great Many Girls and Boys, 1:123-124; Histories of More Children than One, 1:123-124; Holiday Present, 1:123-124 Kilner, M., Jemima Placid, 1:124; William Sedley, 3:98 Peacock, Little Emigrant, 1:198; Visit for a Week, Pilkington, Tales of the Cottage, 1:302-303; Tales of the Hermitage, 1:123 Plumptre, A., Stories for Children, 3:168-170 Plunkett, Village Library, 1:318-319 S., E., Cup of Sweets, 3:166; Gertrude, 3:166-167; Interesting Tales, 4:194-195 Somerville, Flora, 2:182-183; Mabel Woodbine, 1:300; New Children in the Wood, 1:300-301 Tales for Youth, 2:188 Tales of the Arbour, 1:198-Triumph of Good Nature, 1:428 W., S., Puzzle for a Curious Girl, 2:112-113; Visit to a Farm House, 3:376-377; Visit to London, 4:173-177

Winlove, Collection, 2:47 Youth's Monitor, 1:123

Chapters of Accidents, 1:509 - tales, moral: Edgeworth, M., Moral Tales, 2:425-432 Hunter, Letters from Mrs. Palmerstone, 5:82-88 Hurry, Faithful Contrast, 4:74; Rational Amusement, 4:73 Margery, History of Young Edwin, 1:422-423 Pinchard, Two Cousins, 1:441 Roberts, M., Telescope, 4:82-83 Soave, Moral Tales, 2:125 - tales, oriental: Adventures of Kamoula, 1:319-320 Brewer, Life of Rolla, 2:189-192; Siamese Tales, 2:497-498 Christmas Tales, 3:383-389 Dodsley, Economy, 1:455-461 Enchanted Mirror, 1:440 Governess, 2:488-489 Hive, 3:383-389 Juvenile Tales, 3:383-389 Kendall, Adventures of Musul, 1:425 See also Bible, historical books, children's versions; Tracts Fielding, Henry: Joseph Andrews, 3:396; Tom Jones, 2:100, 441 Fielding, Sarah, Governess, or, Little Female Academy, 1:62, 2:488; review: (1765), 1:137-138 Filial Duty, Recommended and En-

forced by a Variety of Instructive

and Entertaining Stories of

- tales, cautionary: Darton,

Children Who Have Been Remarkable for Affection to Their Parents (Newbery), 2:186-188

First Book for Children (Murray), 4:189-190

First Chapter of Accidents (Darton), 1:509

First Elements of Astronomy, and of Other Branches of Natural Philosophy...with Suitable Reflections on the Works of Providence. 5th ed. (Sacl, 1803), 4:169-171

First Going to School (Kilner, D.), 4:412

First Principles of Christian Knowledge (Burgess), 4:61-63

Fisherman; An Interesting Tale for Young People (Bath: Steart; London: Champante & Co.), 1:437

Fleury, Claude, Historical Catechism, 2:22-24; Short History of the Ancient Israelites with an Account of Their Manners, Customs, Laws, Polity, Religion, Sects, Arts and Trades...Much Enlarged from The Apparatus Biblicus of Père Lamy (Baynes, 1802), 2:311-319

Flora (Somerville), 2:182-183

Florian, Jean, Select Fables, Written for the Purpose of Instilling into the Minds of Early Youth a True Sense of Religion (Harris, 1806), 5:423 Fordyce, Dr., Sermons, 1:331-332

Fortune's Football (Jenner), 5:420-422

Foundling (Johnson, R.), 1:504 France: 3:21, 139; education in, 2:253-256; influence on children's books, 1:200-201, 3:150; influence on English education, 1:6-7, 11-12, 153-158; language, study of, 2:20, 406; Revolution, 1:19-21, 135-136, 192-197, 264-265, 2:188, 313, 3:294-295, 5:227-228. See also Free-thinking

Frank (Edgeworth), 2:240-245

Frederick II (king of Prussia), 1:9, 150, 210. See also Freethinking; Monarchy

Freedom: 1:377, 2:164-165; press, of, 3:83-84

Freethinkers and freethinking: Alembert, Jean Le Rond d', 1:9-10, 148-149, 210-217, 335

— allegory of, 1:91-99, 158-162

anti-Christian conspiracy, 1:2-3,
9-11, 17-21, 145-152, 209-219, 254, 273-279, 2:189-192,
483-484, 3:148-150, 5:3-4,
220-221

— atheism and, 1:84-85, 310-312, 2:101-106, 3:82, 5:20-21, 220-221

- book fairs, and, 1:15

— children's books and, 1:64-65, 67, 244-264, 3:148-150

— defined, 2:193-197

— Deism, 1:23-27, 136-137, 160-161, 2:65-73, 129-140, 193-194, 196, 208-209, 258-272, 320-324, 338, 385-395, 449-461, 464, 3:359-360, 361-372, 4:154-155, 167-168, 264-265, 368-370, 5:31-42, 80-81

— Diderot, Denis, 1:9-10, 145-149, 211-214, 2:194-196

— Encyclopédie, 1:9-10, 82-84, 209-219, 244-245, 2:197, 4:253-256

Frederick II (king of Prussia),1:9, 150, 210

— illuminati, 2:364, 483, 3:139

- Jacobinism, 1:17-21, 68-76, 145-152, 197, 209-219, 244-264, 273-279, 455-461, 2:105-106, 364-371, 4:102-103
- morality and, 5:25-31
- Paine, Thomas, 1:74, 143, 5:163, 259
- Priestley, Joseph, 3:352, 356
- -- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 1:138-141, 144, 182, 184-191, 2:330, 3:94, 356-357, 361, 4:369-370, 5:283-284
- Voltaire, 1:9-10, 145-152, 210-217, 232, 273-279, 2:196
- Wakefield, Gilbert, 5:192. See also Memoirs of Infidel Authors

Frend, William: 4:110-112; Evening Amusements; or, The Beauty of the Heavens Displayed (Mawman, 1803), 3:96-97

Friend of Mothers (Fenn), 2:49 "Friendly Address to the Labouring Part of the Community" (West), 3:105-106

Friendly Admonitions (Badger), 3:344-351

Friendly Adviser (Wheatley), 1:440 "Friendly Hints to a Servant" (RTS, no. XII), 4:159

Friendly Instructor, or, A Companion for Young Ladies and Gentlemen in Which Their Duty to God and Their Parents Are Recommended...in Familiar Dialogues (Rivingtons), 2:432-433 Friendship, 5:301-304

G

G., H., esq. *Poor Child's Friend*. 2nd ed. (York: Todd, 1790), 2:50

- Galloway, Joseph, Brief Commentaries upon Such Parts of the Revelations and Other Prophecies, as Immediately Refer to the Present Times (Rivington & Hatchard, 1802), 1:81-84
- Galton, Samuel John, Natural History of Birds...with Copperplates (Johnson), 2:497
- Gambling: 2:443; Hoyle, Edmund, 4:302; playing cards, 1:301, 391n, 3:258-259
- Games: 1:301-302, 2:19-20, 435-436, 3:155-158, 257-259, 4:77, 301-303; reviews: *Book of Games*, 4:301-304
 - Mince Pies for Christmas, 4:97-101
 - New Game of Emulation, 4:77
 - Puzzling Cap, 1:506
 - Thumb, *Bag of Nuts*, 1:504. See also Play

Garden Amusements, for Improving the Minds of Little Children (Darton and Harvey, 1803), 4:172-173 Gardiner, Jane, Excursion from London to Dover (Harris, 1806), 5:425 Gaultier, abbé de, 1:275-276

Gay, John, *Fables*, 1:62, 2:351, 408, 3:291, 390, 5:424

Geddes, Rev. Alexander, New Translation of the Bible, 5:94

Gellert, Christian, Life of...with a Course of Moral Lessons, Delivered by Him at the University of Leipsick (Hatchard, 1805), 4:271-291; "On the Superiority of Morality, as Known in Our Days," 4:341-347, 5:25-42

Gender differentiation: 3:257, 5:159-160; dolls and, 2:33-34, 429, 3:169-170, 257, 4:413; games and, 3:155-158, 258-289, 4:301-303

- Genlis, Stephanie, Adelaide and Theodore; or, Letters on Education, 2:293-302
 - Age of Chivalry; or, Friendship of Other Times...Abridged and Selected from "The Knights of the Swan." By C. Butler, Jun. (Peacock; S. Low, 1799), 2:433-434
 - La Bruyère the Less; or, Characters and Manners of the Children of the Present, 1:334-336, 2:193-197; review: (Longman, 1802), 1:443-449
 - New Method of Instruction for Children from Five to Ten Years Old, Including Moral Dialogues, 3:150-159
 - *Sacred Dramas*, 2:499; review: 2:500-507
 - Theatre of Education, 2:501, 3:385, 388, 389; review: (Cadell, Elmsley and Durham, 1781), 2:507-511
- Veillées du Chateau, 1:302, 3:389 George III (king of England), 1:74-76. See also Monarchy
- Geographical Companion to Mrs. Trimmer's Scripture, Ancient, Roman and English Histories for Young Children (Tabart, 1802), 2:489
- Geographical Guide (Bisset), 4:75-77
- Geography: 1:207, 212, 271, 403; reviews: Bisset, Geographical Guide, 4:75-77
 - Elements of Astronomy, 3:302
 - Geographical Companion to Mrs. Trimmer, 2:489
 - History of Man, 2:250-251
 - Library for Youth, 1:309

- Roberts, E., Geography and History, 2:490
- Smith, T., Universal Atlas, 1:207-208
- Wakefield, *Family Tour*, 3:283-284; *Juvenile Travellers*, 1: 134-137
- Wilmshurst, Progressive Lessons, 2:114-116
- Geology: 1:271, 2:273; review: E., H., Natural History of the Earth, 1:271-272. See also Science
- Germany: clergy in, 4:244-246; anti-Christian conspiracy in, 1:13-16; literature of, 1:79-80, 2:483-484, 3:150; schools in, 4:274
- Gertrude, Agnes, Melite and Amelia Douglas (S., E.), 3:166-167
- Gessner, *Death of Abel*, 1:203-207 Ghosts: 1:107, 267, 3:264, 4:78-79. See also Fairies
- Gibbon, Edward, 4:384. See also History
- Giles, James, English Parsing, Comprising Our Rules of Syntax (Darton and Harvey, 1803), 4:105
- Gillam, Robert, "Address to the Ladies from the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor," 3:251-254
- Gillet, R., Moral Philosophy and Logic, Adapted to the Capacities of Youth (Sael,1798), 3:301-302
- Girls: accomplishments, 1:369, 2:400-406, 429, 3:343, 350-352, 5:160, 190
 - -- clothing, 1:268, 2:403-406, 3:296-297
 - dancing, 2:254-255, 401-402, 3: 258, 350
 - daughters, 3:336-342

- drawing, 2:403, 3:159, 350, 352
- diary of an 18-year-old, 5:139-151
- education, Christian, 3:1-82, 113-139, 209-229, 305-323, 4:1-31, 113-141, 209-227, 313-340, 5:97-117, 193-235, 305-399
- music, 2:254, 400-401, 3:109-111, 350, 352, 4:414-416, 5:71-74
- reading: of an 18-year-old, 5:139-151; recommended for, 3:114-116
- sisters, 1:362-368, 2:430, 3:339,5:159-160. See also Women
- Gisborne, Thomas, Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex, 3:255; review: 3:335-342
- Gleaner (Lane, 1799), 3:383-389
- God: children's books, in, 1:381-391, 2:456-461, 488, 498; education, Christian and, 1:412-420, 2:198-199, 3:373-375; infants, comprehension of, 1:107-110, 2:272, 284; kingdom of, 5:107-110, 192-235
- Godliness, mystery of, 3:113-139, 5:305-399. See also Millenium
- Godparents, 1:37-48. See also Family Godwin, William: 2:55, 101; Fables, Antient and Modern; Adapted for the Use of Children, from Three to Eight Years of Age. 2 v. (Hodgkins, 1805), 5:282-296
 - Bible Stories, Memorable Acts of the Ancient Patriarchs, Judges and Kings. 2 v. (Phillips, 1802), 1:244-264
 - Sacred Histories; or, Entertaining Narratives and Moral Stories. 2 v. (Tabart, 1804), 3:372-375

- Goethe, Johann, Sorrows of Young Werther, 1:77-80, 318
- "Golden Rule" (Watts), 4:159
- Goldsmith, Oliver, Goody Two-Shoes. See History of Little Goody Two-Shoes
 - Natural History; Abridged For the Use of Schools. By Mrs. Pilkington (Vernor & Hood, 1803), 2:116-120
- Good Child's Delight (Kilner, D.), 1:123-124
- Good Effects of Sincere and Constant Prayer, Exemplified in the History of the Dobson Family (Rivingtons, 1803), 2:447-448
- "Good Old Way, or The Religion of Our Forefathers" (RTS, no. XXIX), 4:395
- Goody Two-Shoes. See History of Little Goody Two-Shoes
- Governess (Fielding, S.), 1:62, 137-138, 2:488
- Governess; or, Evening Amusements at a Boarding School (Vernor & Hood; Newbery, 1800), 2:488-489
- Governesses: 1:7, 2:19, 213-214, 359, 491-492, 3:107, 109; authority of, 1:368-370; in fiction, 2:416, 431-432, 488, 3:200-203; books for, review: Fenn, *Some Hints*, 1:514-515
- Grace: Bible and, 1:479-481; children and, 1:103, 169, 348; covenant of, 3:213-214, 222; regeneration of, 4:312-314, 5:165-166; review: Rictrie, "Present for Youth," 1:515-523
- Grammar: 2:26; reviews: Devis, *Accidence*, 3:303
 - Fenn, Child's Grammar, 4:199

Mother's Grammar, 2:26n Mrs. Lovechild's Series of Grammatical Knowledge, 4:199-200

Parsing Lessons, 4:200

- Giles, English Parsing, 4:105
- Holland, Definitions, 4:195-199
- Library for Youth, 1:309
- Murray, Abridgment, 2:419 English Exercises, 2:419 English Grammar, 2:418-419
- Wilmshurst, Progressive Lessons, 2:114-116. See also Schoolbooks
- Grandmother's Stories (B. Crosby; B. Tabart), 1:306
- Grant, Rev. J., Manual of Religious Knowledge; For the Use of Schools, and of the Poor in General. 2nd ed. (Hatchard, 1805), 5:57-66
- Gray, Rev. Robert, *Catechism*, 4:60; "Dialogue between a Churchman and a Methodist," 4:60
- Great Chain of Being, 2:268-272 Grey, Lady Jane, 1:90-91
- Guardian Angel (Kotzebue), 1:317-318
- Guardian of Education: audience of, 1:8n, 101
 - book reviewing, 1:49-50, 80
 - correspondents: A., L. M., "Aecount of the Death of a Modern Philosopher," 4:253-256

Anonymous: "Account of the Present State of Education in France," 2:253-256; "Prospectus of an Intended Publication of a Collection of Gazettes,"

- 5:95-96; "Short Abstract of Dr. Kipling's Pamphlet on Calvinism," 2:59-64
- Anxious Observer, "Music in Young Ladies' Education," 3:109-112
- B., J. W. L., "Exemplary Character of R. 11.," 3:242-252, 5:42-44; "Mr. William Frend's *Evening Amusement*," 4:110-112; "Strictures on the Duties of Masters and Mistresses," 1:279-284
- B., S., "Scripture Readings in Sabbath Observance,"3:111-112
- C., M. H., "Letter Written by John Lee," 3:395-400; "Prayer to Be Used by the Committee of the Ladies' School in St. Sepulchre's Parish, London," 3:304
- Cappe, C., "Subscription for the Author Charlotte Richardson," 4:433-436; "Statement of the Account for the Subscription to Charlotte Richardson's Poems," 5:427-428
- Clericus, "Exemplary Character of a Mother and Son," 5:410-417; "White's *Diatessarion*," 1:525-526
- Constant Reader, "Lines from Poems by the late J. 11. Beattie," 4:205-208
- H., J., "Extract from La Bruyère the Less. On the Death of Mme. Roland," 1:334-336

- K., F. E., "MS. Papers Found in the Writing-Desk of a Young Lady after Her Decease," 5:136-151
- L., P., "Sermon on the Character of a Good Christian," 2:511-517
- M., A., "Pious and Exemplary Death of a Young Lady," 2:382-384
- P., O., "Cinderella," 2:448 Philobiblios, "Concerning Novels," 5:426-427
- R., P., "Systems of Education for Sons Who Will Enter Professions," 1:461-464, 2:128, 384
- S., Maria, "Extract from Solomon Saunter's Literary Leisure. no. XIII," 1:141-144
- T, M., "Private Education," 3:106-108
- correspondents, answers to,1:400, 464, 526, 2:128, 384,448, 517, 3:109, 111, 112,208, 304, 400, 4:208, 5:94,304, 427
- errata, 1:272, 336, 3:[4], 112, 208, 304
- poetry submitted to, 5:42-44
- purpose and scope of, 1:1-3, 16, 80, 113, 4:154
- subscriptions, for books, 4:433-436, 5:95-96, 427-428
- suspension of regular publication, 5:428

Gulliver, Lilliputius, *Instructive Les*sons (Newbery, 1800), 1:508 Gunning, Elizabeth. See Plunkett, Elizabeth (Gunning) Guppy, Mrs., Instructive and Entertaining Dialogues for Children. 2nd ed. 2 v. (Wallis, 1804), 3:375-376

Η

- H., J., correspondent, "Extract from Genlis, *La Bruyère the Less* Chap. XIX. On Death," 1:334-336
- Habits: bad, 1:296, 354, 2:243; good, 1:288-289, 2:201-202, 253, 358; morality and, 1:375-376; obedience and, 1:124, 2:94-98, 5:270-271
- Hale, Sir Matthew, Affectionate Epistles to His Children (1788), 3:377-383
- Haller, Baron, Letters...to His Daughter on the Truths of the Christian Religion, 1:465-470, 5:30; review: (Murray, 1780), 2:50-53
- Hamilton, Elizabeth, Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education (Robinson, 1801), 1:50-61, 291, 374, 2:106-112, 304-305; Memoirs of the Life of Agrippina, the Wife of Germanicus (Robinsons, 1805), 4:382-392, 5:45-48
- Hamlain; or, The Hermit of the Beach: A Moral Reverie (Newbery, 1799), 1:312-315
- Hamlain, Author of, Moralist; or, Amusing and Instructive Dialogues (West & Hughes, 1799), 1:315-316 Handicapped: 1:438-440, 2:493,
- 5:56, 420-422; reviews: Jenner, *Fortune's Football*, 5:420-422
 - Julius, 1:438-439
 - Pinchard, Blind Child, 2:493
- Hanway, Jonas, Domestic Happiness Promoted; In a Series of Discourses from a Father to His Daughter, on

the Occasion of Her Going to Service...Abridged from "Virtue in Humble Life" (Rivingtons), 2:493-494

Happiness, 2:144-145, 163-164, 267, 449-453, 3:199, 208-212, 5:23-24

Happy Family; or, Memoirs of Mr. and Mrs. Norton: Intended to Shew the Delightful Effects of Filial Obedience (Marshall), 2:363

The Hare; or, Hunting Incompatible with Humanity (Vernor & Hood, 1799), 1:323

Harlequin, 1:144

Harry and Lucy (Edgeworth), 2:175-182

Hayley, William, Ballads...Founded on Anecdotes Relating to Animals, with Prints Designed and Engraved by William Blake (Phillips, 1805), 4:416-426

Hayne, Charles, *Collection of Songs*, 4:414-416

Heaven, 2:82-83, 88, 206-211, 3:209-210, 5:235-243, 400-404

Hell, 1:392, 520-521, 2:106-111, 266-268, 362

Helme, Elizabeth, History of England, Related in Familiar Conversations. 2 v. (Longman, 1804), 4:63-73

- History of Scotland, Related in Familiar Conversations by a Father to His Children. 2 v. (Hatchard, 1806), 5:417-420
- Instructive Rambles Extended (Low, 1800), 1:134
- Instructive Rambles in London and Its Adjacent Villages. (Longman and Newbery, 1801), 1:133-134

— Maternal Instruction; or, Family Conversations on Moral and Entertaining Subjects. 2 v. (Longman), 2:56-59

Help to the Unlearned in the Study of the Holy Scriptures ('frimmer, S.), 4:106-109

Herbert of Cherbury, Edward, lord, 2:67. See also Philosophy; Deism Heresies, 1:162-168. See also Christianity

Hieroglyphs. See Emblems; Rebuses Hill, Mrs., Poetical Monitor, Consisting of Pieces, Select and Original, for the Improvement of Youth in Virtue and Piety, 2nd ed. (Longman, 1798), 1:130-132

Hill, Rev. Rowland, *Instructions for Children; or, A Token of Love for the Rising Generation.* 2nd ed. with additions (Thompson, 1799), 1:391-392 Hinduism, 3:117-118, 139-147, 229-236

Hints towards Forming the Character of a Young Princess (More), 4:291-294

Historical Account of the Voyages of Captain Cook (Mavor), 5:81

Historical and Miscellaneous Questions (Mangnall), 5:192

Historical Catechism (Fleury), 2:22-24 Histories and Tales of Past Times (Perrault), 2:185-186

Histories of a Great Many Little Boys and Girls (Kilner, D.), 1:123-124

Histories of More Children than One (Kilner, D.), 1:123-124

History: appeal of, 2:23, 211; children's fiction and, 4:382-383; education, Christian, and, 2:210-226, 4:363-367; freethinking and,

- 1:68-76, 212, 231; Gibbon, Edward, 4:384; Hume, David, 2:21-2; Josephus, 4:387-388; Tacitus, 4:387-388; reviews:
- Adams, Roman History, 5:93
- Dodsley, Chronicle, 1:68-76
- Fleury, Short History of the Israelites, 2:311-319
- Geographical Companion, 2: 489
- Helme, History of England, 4:63-73; History of Scotland, 5:417-420
- Juvenile Library, 1:316-317
- Library for Youth, 1:309
- Mangnall, Historical and Miscellaneous Questions, 5:192
- Museum for Young Gentlemen and Ladies, 2:183
- Roberts, E., Geography and History, 2:490
- Wakefield, Leisure Hours, 1:264-265
- Ziengenhert, Epitome of the History of England, 1:301-302. See also Bible, historical books
- History of a Pin (Smythies), 1:423 History of a School-Boy (Crosby), 1:434-435
- History of Beasts and Birds (Trip), 1:432
- History of Jack and His Eleven Brothers. 2nd ed. (Langley, 1801), 1:426-427
- History of John Gilpin (Cowper), 1:432-433
- History of Little Dick (Little John), 1:434
- History of Little Goody Two-Shoes (Newbery), 1:430-431
- History of Little King Skilful (York: Wilson), 1:504

- History of Man in a Savage and Civilized State...Being the First Volume of the "Minor's Magazine" (B. Crosby; Tegg and Castleman, [1803]), 2:250-251
- History of Margaret Whyte (Cameron), 1:392-393
- History of Master Jackey and Miss Harriot (Glasgow: Lumsden and Son), 1:505
- "History of Mrs. Wilkins; or, The Happiness of Having God for a Friend in Time of Trial. Particularly Addressed to Pregnant Women" (RTS, no. XLIX), 5:272-276
- History of Pompey the Little (Coventry), 1:298
- History of Prince Lee Boo, a Native of the Pelew Islands (Newbery), 1:299-300
- History of Quadrupeds (Trimmer, M.), 3:284
- History of Sandford and Merton (Day), 3:93-96
- History of Susan Gray (Sherwood), 1:267-268, 393, 2:358
- History of Young Edwin and His Sister Jessy (Margery, Who Lives at the Foot of Parnassus), 1:422-423 Hive (Lane, 1799), 3:383-389
- Hobbes, Thomas, 2:68. See also Philosophy
- Holiday Present (Kilner, D.), 1:123-124, 2:364
- Holidays at Home (Sanders), 4:89-90 Holland, John, Definitions, Maxims, Proverbs, and Precepts, on Grammar, Arithmetic, Natural History, Geography, &c. Proposed for Copies in Penmanship. 2nd ed. (Longman, 1804), 4:195-199

- Holloway, William and John Branch, British Museum; or, Elegant Repository of Natural History (J. D. Dewick for J. Badcock, 1803-1804), 2:495-497
- Holy Communion: 1:327, 337-344, 401-407, 470-479, 2:464-481, 3:202-203, 4:156-157, 5:165-167, 273-282; review: Earnest Exhortation to a Frequent Reception of the Lord's Supper, 3:106. See also Sacraments
- Holy Ghost, 1:173-174, 482, 2:87, 388 Homespun, Prudentia (pseud.). See West, Jane
- Hornbooks, 1:5. See also Reading Horne, George (bishop of Norwich), 5:149, Abstract of Bishop Horne's Preface to His Commentary on Psalms, 4:228-236; review: (Rivingstons, 1803), 3:178-179
 - "Letter to Adam Smith, L.L.D. on the Life, Death, and Philosophy of David Hume," 2:3-13
 - -- Life of, 5:149
- Hume, David: 1:149; *History of England*, 2:1-2; "Memoirs of," 2:1-3; philosophy of, 2:3-13, 55, 4:292-294, 5:259-261
- Hunter, Rachel, Letters from Mrs. Palmerstone to Her Daughter, Inculcating Morality by Entertaining Narratives (Longman, 1803), 5:82-88
- Hurry, Ives, Faithful Contrast, or, Virtue and Vice Accurately Delineated in a Series of Moral and Instructive Tales (Harris, 1804), 4:74
 - Rational Amusement for Leisure Hours (Harris, 1804), 4:73

- Tales of Instruction and Amusement (Newbery, 1795), 2:491-492
- Hyde, Edward, Lord Clarendon, "Dialogue on Education," 1:191; "Dialogue on the Respect Due to Age," 1:153-158

Hygiene, 3:160

- Hymns: 1:110; reviews: Barbauld, Hymns in Prose, 2:45-48
 - Choice Collections, 1:511-512
 - Doddridge, "Principles," 4:294-295
 - Grant, Manual, 5:57-66
 - Importance of Religion Considered, 1:333-334
 - Sandham, Addresses of an Affectionate Mother, 2:423-424
 - Watts, Hymns and Moral Songs, 2:360-363
 - Wilkinson, Sermons, 1:512. See also Devotion

Ī

- I., P., Dramatic Pieces, Calculated to Render Young Ladies Amiable and Happy, when Their School Education Is Completed (Marshall), 2:377-381
- Ideas: abstract, 3:361-362; acquisition of, 1:429, 2:435, 496, 3:362-363, 4:410; association of, 1:54, 55-56, 72, 107-111, 240, 250, 378, 413, 497, 2:161-162, 4:78-79; simple, 3:266-267
- Idolatry, 3:132-139, 175-176. See also Christianity
- Illuminati, 2:364, 483, 3:139. See also Freethinking
- Illustrations: animals, of, 4:172;

Bible, of, 1:381-391, 2:23-24; children, effects on, 1:390, 2:485-486, 4:73, 74-75, 5:284, 295-296, 412; emblems, 1:382-391, 2:19-20, 4:417; ideas, acquisition of and, 1:62, 429, 2:20-21, 496, 3:362, 4:410; prints, 2:296-297; quality of, 1:387, 4:303, 304; rebuses, 1:383-391; sources of, 4:74, 428-429n; teaching aids, as, 1:62, 382-391, 2:20-21, 23-24, 5:284 Imagination: 1:86-87, 246, 253, 314-315, 317, 2:186, 4:75; children's, 1:107, 250, 2:220, 3:168, 4:74-75; morality and, 1:247-248 Importance of Religion Considered, and the Relative Duties It Inculcates, with Meditations, Occasional Prayers, and Hymns, Designed for Youth (Sael, 1799), 1:333-334 "Importance of Speaking Truth" (RTS, no. XLIII), 5:163-164 Improvement of the Mind (Watts), 1:77n, 2:424-425 Improvements in Education (Lancaster), 2:171-175 India: education in, 4:370-382; Hinduism, 3:117-118, 139-147, 229-236 Indian Antiquities (Maurice), 3:139-147 Indian Cottage (Saint-Pierre), 2:358, 364-369 Infant's Friend (Fenn), 2:48 Infants: appetites, moderation of, 1:178-179, 237, 281, 292-29; baptism of, 1:34-39, 169-183; books for, 1:124, 4:413; care of, 1:179-183, 190-191, 232-244, 285-298; crying, 1:238, 240; education of, 1:34-39, 99-106, 235-244, 285-298, 347-374, 411-422; infanticide, 2:328-329; language

needs of, 1: 237-238; praise of, 1:291; spiritual condition of, 1:99-100, 169-183, 289-297, 2:465-467, 3:203; toys for, 1:242. See also Adolescents; Children Infidel Father (West), 2:74-82 Iniquity, mystery of, 1:164-168, 3:113-139, 232-236, 4:23-24, 5:211-235. See also Millenium Inismegistus, Hermes, 4:167-168 Innocence, 2:465-467, 3:203 Instructional methods: catechizing, 1:111, 2:22-24, 279-280, 4:401, 5:1-23, 65-66; conversation, 1:63-64, 243, 2:14-15, 44, 49, 82-89, 152-160, 331-343, 3:168; dialogue, 3:363-371; memorization, 1:68, 111, 2:24, 289, 435-436, 3:291, 4:177-178; Socratic method, 2:214-219, 227-228, 3:363-371. See also Education Instructions for Children (Hill, Rev. R.), 1:391-392 Instructive and Entertaining Dialogues (Guppy), 3:375-376 Instructive Lessons (Gulliver), 1:508 Instructive Rambles (Helme), 1:133-

acquisition and, 1:239-243, 372;

Instructive Tales, Author of, Silver Thimble (Newbery, 1799), 2:184 Interesting Tales (S., E.), 4:194-195 Interesting Traits (Ventum), 4:90 "Introduction" (Trimmer, S.), 1:1-16, 61-66

Introduction to the Knowledge of Nature (Trimmer, S.), 3:265-266

J

J., R. See Johnson, Richard

- J., S. See Jones, Stephen
- Jacobinism: 1:17-21, 145-152, 209-219, 273-279, 4:102-103; children's books and, 1:68-76, 197, 244-264,
 - 455-461, 2:100-106, 364-369, 369-371. See also Freethinking
- Jauffret, Louis François, *Little Hermitage* (Phillips), 1:119-122
 - *Tales*. 2nd ed. (Phillips, 1804), 4:185-186
 - Visits to the Menagerie and the Botanical Garden at Paris: Being an Introduction to Natural History and Botany (Phillips, 1804), 1:201-202
- Jemima Placid (Kilner, M.) 1:124 Jenner, Isaac, Fortune's Football (Tabart, 1806), 5:420-422
- Jest books, review: Johnson, R., Youthful Jester, 1:507-508
- Jesus Christ: Messiah as, 4:313-340, 5:110-117, 193-203, 251-262; miracles of, 5:67-69, 257-262; new Covenant and, 5:108-117; prophecies of, 5:193-205; teaching children about, 2:85-88; types of, 4:113-141, 209-227
- Jews: 1:69-70; conversion of, 5:380-382; German Memorialists, 4:247-248; Israelites, 2:273-277, 3:11-67, 122-139, 215-229, 4:18-26, 113-141, 208-227, 5:6-22; Mosaic law, 3:305-323, 4:4-18, 31-40, 113-115, 141-144, 358-370, 5:5-22
- Johnson, Richard, Adventures of a Silver Penny (Newbery, 1800), 1:428
 - Foundling: or, The History of Lucius Stanhope (Harris, 1805), 1:504
 - Juvenile Rambles through the

- Paths of Nature (Newbery), 1:508-509
- *Lilliputian Library*, 1:436, 437, 500
- Rural Felicity; or, The History of Tommy and Sally (Harris), 1:506-507
- Tea-Table Dialogues between a Governess and Her Scholars (Darton & Harvey, 1798), 1:308
- Toy-Shop; or, Sentimental Preceptor (Newbery), 2:183-184
- Youthful Jester; or, Repository of Wit and Innocent Amusement (Newbery), 1:507-508
- Johnson, Samuel, 2:258-259, 260-262, 353-355, 5:270-271
- Joke books. See Jest books
- Jones, Stephen, Life and Adventures of a Fly (Newbery), 2:184-185; Oracles, Containing Some Particulars of the History of Billy and Kitty Wilson (Newbery), 1:507
- Jones, Rev. William, Book of Nature; or, The True Sense of Things Explained and Made Easy to the Capacities of Children. 5th ed. (Rivingtons, 1803), 3:273-283
 - "Disquisition on the Mosaic Distinction of Animals into Clean and Unclean," 4:31-40, 141-144
 - "Letter on the Church," 1:479-481
 - "Sermon on the Pleasures of Heavenly-Mindedness," 5:400-404
 - "Some Seasonable Cautions against Errors in Doctrine," 1:162-168, 223-232

— "Two Letters to a Predestinarian," 1:344-347, 408-411

Jones, Sir William, "The Primeval Religion of the Hindoos," 3:229-236

Josephus, 4:387-388. See also History

Joshua, 4:127-139

Joyce, Jeremiah, Scientific Dialogues, Intended for the Instruction and Entertainment of Young People: In Which the First Principles of Natural and Experimental Philosophy Are Fully Explained. 2 v. (Johnson, 1800), 1:306-307 Judges, 2:415, 491

Julius; or, The Deaf and Dumb Orphan (Newbery, 1801), 1:438-439

Juvenile Anecdotes (Wakefield), 1:266-267

Juvenile Instruction (Ventum), 1:512-513

Juvenile Library; Including a Complete Course of Instructions in Every Useful Subject. With Productions of Young Students, and a Monthly Distribution of Prizes. 4 v. (Hurst, 1801), 1:316-317

Juvenile Mirror; Containing Moral and Instructive Tales; Interspersed with Interesting Biography (Hurst, 1802), 4:186

Juvenile Olio (Mavor), 2:434-436 Juvenile Plutarch: Containing Accounts of the Lives of Children (Phillips, 1801), 1:128-130

Juvenile Rambles (Johnson, R.), 1:508-509

Juvenile Stories and Dialogues (Vernor & Hood and E. Newbery, 1801), 1:502-503

Juvenile Tales (Lane, 1799), 3:383-389

Juvenile Travellers (Wakefield),
 1:134-137
 Juvenilia: 5:136-151, 243-250, 415-417; reviews: Juvenile Library,
 1:316-317

K

K., F. E., correspondent, "MS. Papers Found in the Writing-Desk of a Young Lady after Her Decease," 5:136-151

Keeper's Travels (Kendall), 1:393-400 Kendall, Edward Augustus: Adventures of Musul; or, The Three Gifts (Vernor & Hood and E. Newbery, 1800), 1:425

- Crested Wren (Newbery, 1799), 1:299
- Keeper's Travels in Search of His Master. 2nd ed. (Newbery, 1799), 1:393-400
- Lessons of Virtue, or, The Book of Happiness (E. Newbery, 1801), 2:371
- Parental Education; or, Domestic Lessons. A Miscellany Intended for Youth, 2:100-106
- -- Sparrow (Newbery, 1798), 1:423-424
- Stories of Senex; or, Little Histories of Little People (Harris), 1:425

Kilner, Dorothy, Dialogues and Letters on Morality, Economy, and Politeness, for the Improvement and Entertainment of Young Female Minds. 3 v. (Marshall), 3: 98

— Doll's Spelling Book (Marshall, 1803), 2:424

- First Going to School; or, Tom Brown and His Sisters (Tabart, 1804), 4:412
- Good Child's Delight; or, The Road to Knowledge, 1:123-124
- Histories of a Great Many Little Boys and Girls, 1:123-124
- Histories of More Children than One, 1:123-124
- Holiday Present; Containing Anecdotes of Mr. and Mrs. Jenner and Their Little Family (Marshall), 1:123-124, 2:364
- Life and Perambulation of a Mouse (Marshall), 1:123-124, 435-436
- Little Stories for Little Folks, in Easy Lessons of One, Two and Three Syllables (Marshall), 1:123-124
- New Dialogues for the Amusement of Good Children (Tabart, 1804), 4:412
- Rational Brutes; or, Talking Animals (Vernor & Hood, 1799), 1:309
- Short Conversations, 1:123-124
- Village School; or, Collection of Entertaining Histories (Marshall), 1:123-124
- Kilner, Mary Ann, Adventures of a Pin-Cushion, 1:124, 436
 - Course of Lectures for Sunday Evenings. 2 v. (Marshall, 1783-1790), 2:54, 5:88-93
 - Familiar Dialogues for the Instruction and Amusement of Children Four and Five Years Old (Marshall), 1:124

- Jemima Placid; or, The Advantages of Good-Nature (Marshall), 1:124
- Memoirs of a Peg-Top (Marshall), 1:124
- Sacred Exhibition at Worthington Hall; or, Select Paintings of Scripture History Considered (Rivingtons), 1:450-455
- William Sedley; or, The Evil Day Deferred (Marshall), 3:98

Kings. See Monarchy
Kipling, Dr., 2:59-64
Klopstock, *Death of Adam*, 2:502
Knox, Vicesimus, 3:350
Kotzebue, *Guardian Angel* (Vernor & Hood, 1802), 1:317-318

L

- L., P., correspondent, "Sermon on the Character of a Good Christian Written More than Fifty Years Ago," 2:511-517
- La Bruyère the Less (Genlis), 1:335-336, 443-449, 2:193-197
- Ladder to Learning; A Select Collection of Fables. New ed., corrected (Harris, 1805), 4:297-298, 5:285
- Ladies' Committee for Bettering the Condition of the Female Poor, 4:201-202. See also Philanthropic Societies
- Ladies' School, St. Sepulchre's Parish, London, 3:304. See also Schools
- Lady's Preceptor (Creswick), 2:490-491
- La Fontaine, *Fables*, 1:150, 2:22, 25, 28

- Lambert, Anne Therèse, Mother's Advice to Her Son and Daughter. New ed. (Vernor & Hood, 1800), 1:320-323
- Lambert, Jean François Saint-, Les Saisons, 1:130
- Lancaster, Joseph: 3:471; Improvements in Education, as It Respects the Industrious Classes of the Community (Darton & Harvey, 1803), 2:171-175
- Latitudinarianism, 1:227-228
- Law, Gilbert, 5:142
- Leading Strings to Knowledge (Somerville), 5:297
- Lecture Françoise (Murray), 2:423n Lectures on Female Education (Burton), 3:351-356
- Lee, John (parkkeeper), 3:395-400 L'Épée, Charles-Michel, abbé, 1:437-
- Leland, John, View of the Principal Deistical Writers of the Sixteenth and Beginning of the Seventeenth Centuries, 2:65-73, 129-140
- Le Prince de Beaumont, Jeanne, 1:7n, Magazin des Adolescents, 1:63, Magazin des Enfans, 1:63, 308, 437
- Lessons for Children (Barbauld), 1:63-64, 2:43-45, 170, 175-176, 177, 180, 443
- Lessons of Virtue (Kendall), 2:371
- "Letter on the Church" (Jones, Rev. W.), 1:479-481
- "Letter Written by Bishop Hough" (Wilmot), 3:342-344
- "Letter to Adam Smith, L. L. D. on the Life, Death and Philosophy of David Hume" (Horne), 2:3-13
- "Letter Written by John Lee,

- Formerly Parkkeeper to the Earl of Dysart" (C., M. H., correspondent), 3:395-400
- Letters: children, by, 5:150-151, 415-417; Grey, Lady Jane, by, 1:91; Louis XVI, king of France, by, 3:82-84; a parkkeeper, by, 3:395-400
 - reviews: Aikin, J., Arts of Life, 1:118-119
 - Letters from a Father, 2:373-377
 - Letters to a Young Lady, 3:285-294
 - Chapone, Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, 1:330-333
 - Chesterfield, *Letters to His Son*, 2:425
 - Hale, Affectionate Epistles, 3:377-383
 - Haller, Letters to His Daughter, 2:50-53
 - Hunter, Letters from Mrs. Palmerstone, 5:82-88
 - Kilner, D., Dialogues and Letters, 3:98
 - Letters of Consolation, 3:189-195
 - Obsolete Ideas, 5:186-191
 - Pennington, Unfortunate Mother's Advice, 1:325-327
 - S., M., Letters from a Mother, 5:425-426
 - Wakefield, *Family Tour*, 3:283-284; *Juvenile Travellers*, 1: 134-137
 - West, Letters Addressed to a Young Man, 1:76-77. See also Guardian of Education, correspondents to
- Letters of Consolation and Advice

- from a Father to His Daughter, on the Death of Her Sister (Rivingtons, 1804), 3:189-195
- Letters on the Religious Education of Infancy (Delue), 1:21-27, 2:140-150, 197-211, 272-282, 324-331, 395-398, 462-464
- Letters on Christianity Addressed to M. Teller (Deluc), 4:244-253, 358-370, 5:1-24
- Lewis, Alethea, Essays on the Art of Being Happy, Addressed to a Young Mother by Eugenia de Acton. 2 v. (Lane, 1803), 3:199-200
- Liberty. See Freedom
- *Library for Youth.* 9 v. (Wallis, 1800), 1:309
- Libraries: circulating, 1:63; miniature, 1:309, 509
- Life and Adventures of a Fly (Jones, S.), 2:184-185
- Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins (Paltock), 1:432
- Life...and Course of Moral Lectures (Gellert), 4:271-291, 341-347, 5:25-42
- Life and Perambulation of a Mouse (Kilner, D.), 1:123-124, 435-436
- "Life and Sayings of Mr. Philip Henry" (RTS, no. XIX), 4:296
- Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe (Defoe), 3:297-300, 357
- "Life of Colonel James Gardiner" (Doddridge), 4:295-296
- Life of Joseph (Macgowan), 2:120-125
- "Life of Lord Rochester" (Burnet), 4:158
- "Life of Mr. John Bunyan" (RTS, no. XI), 4:159

- Life of Rolla (Brewer), 2:189-192, 498
- Lilliputian Library (Johnson, R.), 1:436, 437, 500
- Literary appreciation, reviews: Aikin, J., Letters from a Father, 2:373-377; Letters to a Young Lady, 3:285-294
 - Essays on the Beauties of the Universe, 3:170-176
 - Juvenile Library, 1:316-317
 - Smith, C., Conversations Introducing Poetry, 4:177-185, 299-301
- Literary Leisure (Clarke), 1:141-144 Little Dog Trusty (Edgeworth), 2:302-304
- Little Emigrant (Peacock), 1:198 Little Hermitage (Jauffret), 1:119-122 Little Jack of All Trades. pt I. (Darton & Harvey, 1805), 5:55-56
- Little John, History of Little Dick (Darton & Harvey, 1800), 1:434 Little Juba (Harris, 1802), 1:298 Little Mountaineers (Ducray-Duminil), 2:446
- Little Red Riding Hood, 2:186; review: (Tabart, 1804), 4:74-75 Little Stories for Little Folks (Kilner,
- D.), 1:123-124 Locke, John: 1:62, 299, 5:130; Thoughts Concerning Education, 1:8-9, 3:159-164, 263-267. See also
- London, reviews: *Curiosities of London*, 1:433, 5:54-55

Philosophy

- Gardiner, Excursion from London to Dover, 5:425
- Helme, *Instructive Rambles*, 1:133-134
- W., S., Visit to London, 4:173-177

Lord's Prayer, 1:5, 9, 110, 2:151-152, 158-159. See also Prayers

Louis XVI, king of France, "Letters. No. XVI. To M. de Malsherbes," 3:82-84. See also Monarchy

Love: 5:405-406, caretakers, for, 1:369-370; education, role in, 1:235-236, 2:28-29, 40-41, 95, 197-199, 202; filial, 1:236-237, 297-298, 348-353, 357, 360, 411-412; fraternal, 1:362-368, 3:339, 5:161-162; God, for, 1:412-420

Lovechild, Mrs. (pseud.). See Fenn, Lady Ellenor

Lower classes: books for, 5:94; charity schools, 1:8n, 4:201-205, 370-382, 5:2n, 185; condition of, 2:314-316; children's fiction, in, 3:236-242, 3:360; education of, 1:8, 2:171-175, 280, 4:201-205, 370-383, 5:2n, 185; manners and morals of, 2:75, 3:177-178, 236-242, 251-254; letter, by a gamekeeper, 3:395-400; poetry, by a schoolmistress, 5:180-186; books for, reviews: Advice and Admonition, 3:176-178

- "Cottager's Religious Meditations," 2:371-373
- Diatessarion, 3:188-189
- "Friendly Hints to a Servant," 4:159
- G., H., Poor Child's Friend, 2:50
- Genlis, *Theatre of Education*, 2:507-511
- Good Effects of Sincere and Constant Prayer, 2:447-448
- Grant, Manual of Religious Knowledge, 5:57-66
- Hanway, *Domestic Happiness*, 2:493-494

- Hill, Mrs., Poetical Monitor, 1:130-132
- Martin and James, 1:431-432
- Most Important Truths and Duties of Christianity, 3:284
- Pearson, "Admonition against Lay Preaching," 5:94
 - "Plain Reasons against Separating from the Established Church," 5:94 "Plain Reasons for the Practice of Infant Baptism," 5:94
- Plunkett, Village Library, 1:318-319
- Sherwood, History of Susan Gray, 1:267-268
- Somerville, Village Maid, 4:424
- Sunday Miscellany, 3:167-168
- Vain Cottager, 3:296-297
- Virtue in a Cottage, 1:435
- West, "Friendly Address to the Labouring Part of the Community," 3:105-106. See also Servants

Luc, J. A. de. See Deluc, Jean André Lying, 2:204-206, 326-327, 362-363, 412-414, 3:151-152, 5:163-164, 263-264

M

M., A., correspondent, "Pious and Exemplary Death of a Young Lady," 2:382-384; "Private Confession of Faith of a Christian," 5:243-250
M. P. (pseud.). See Kilner, Dorothy Mabel Woodbine (Somerville), 1:300
Macgowan, John, Life of Joseph the Son of Israel. 3rd ed. (Baynes, 1803), 2:120-125

Magazin des Adolescents (Le Prince de Beaumont), 1:63

Magazin des Enfans (Le Prince de Beaumont), 1:63, 308, 437

Magnet, William, Newtonian System of Philosophy Explained by Familiar Objects by Tom Telescope. A New and Improved Edition (Vernor & Hood, 1798), 1:441-442

"Making a Holiday in Heaven" (ballad), 1:109

Male Asylum at Egmore, Madras, 4:371-382. See also Schools

Malherbes, 3:83-84

Man: civilization and, 4:407-410; fall of, 2:271-272; inventions of, 2:391-393; origin of, 2:119; primitive, 1:299-300, 3:324-335; reason of, 1:119; soul of, 2:117-118; review: *History of Man*, 2:250-251

Mangnall, Richmal, Historical and Miscellaneous Questions, for the Use of Young People; with a Selection of British and General Biography. 4th ed. (Longman, 1805), 5:192

Manners: affectation, 5:300-304; decay of, 2:278; children's, 1:508, 2:437, 3:90, 170, 267, 5:32-33, 160-161; lower classes, of, 2:75, 3:177-178, 236-242, 251-254; review: *Polite Academy*, 2:113-114. See also Conduct

Manual of Religious Knowledge (Grant, J.), 5:57-66

"MS. Papers Found in the Writing-Desk of a Young Lady after Her Decease," (K., F. E., correspondent), 5:136-151

Manuscripts of Vertudeo (Andrews), 1:127-128

Margery, Who Lives at the Foot of Parnassus, *History of Young Edwin* and His Sister Jessy (Harris, 1802), 1:422-423

Marmontel, 5:267

Marriage, 2:316-317, 369, 3:340-342, 5:187-191. See also Family

Martin, Benjamin, Young Gentleman and Lady's Philosophy, 1:308

Martin, Sarah Catherine, Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard and Her Dog (Harris, 1805), 4:413-414

Martin and James; or, The Reward of Integrity (Darton & Harvey, 1798), 1:431-432

Marvellous Adventures (Pilkington), 1:303

Mary and Her Cat (Fenwick), 4:412-413

Mathematics. See Arithmetic

Maternal Instruction (Helme), 2:5659

Maurice, Thomas, "Dissertation Concerning the Theology of Hindostan," 3:117-118, 139-147

Mavor, William, Father's Gift to His Children. 2 v. (Phillips, 1805), 4:190-194

- Historical Account of the Voyages of Captain Cook. 2 v. (Harris, 1805), 5:81

— Juvenile Olio; or, Mental Medley (Newbery, 1796), 2:434-436

Maxims. See Proverbs

Meals, 1:293-296, 3:160-161

Meditation, 5:407-408. See also Devotion

Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism (Barruel), 1:17-21, 145-152, 209-219, 273-279

Memorization, 1:68, 111, 2:24, 289, 435-436, 3:291, 4:177-178. See also Education, instructional methods *Memoirs of a Peg-Top* (Kilner, M.), 1:124, 436

Memoirs of Deistical Authors (Leland), 2:65-73, 129-140

Memoirs of Infidel Authors: A., L. M., correspondent, "Account of the Death of a Modern Philosopher," 4:253-256

- Barruel, *Memoirs*, 1:17-21, 145-152, 209-219, 273-279
- Deluc, Letters on the Religious Education of Infancy, 1:21-27, 414, 2:140-150, 197-211, 272-282, 324-331, 395-398, 411, 462-481; Letters on Christianity Addressed to M. Teller, 4:244-253, 358-370, 5:1-24
- Galloway, Brief Commentaries, 1:81-84
- Genlis, "On Freethinking," [from La Bruyère the Less], 2:193-197
- Haller, *Letters*, 1:465-470
- Hyde, "Dialogue on the Respect Due to Age," 1:153-158
- Leland, Memoirs of Deistical Authors, 2:65-73, 129-140
- Roland, "Extract from a Manuscript on Old Age," 1:84-91
- Trimmer, S., "Memoirs of David Hume," 2:1-3

 "Observations upon Pope's Essay on Man," 2:257-72, 321-324, 385-395, 449-454

 "Strictures on the 'Universal Prayer," 2:454-461. See also Freethinking

Memoirs of the Life of Agrippina (Hamilton), 4:382-392, 5:45-48
Men. See Boys; Fathers; Parents
Mental Amusement, or, The Juvenile
Moralist (Sael, 1798), 1:272

Mental Improvement (Wakefield), 1:265-266

Mental Pleasures, Containing Interesting Stories (Lane, 1799), 4:95-97 Mentorial Tales (Pilkington), 1:437-438

Methodism, 1:229-230. See also Christianity

Millenium: 4:308-312, 5:304-399; Antichrist and, 5:221-235, 341-343; godliness, mystery of, 3:113-139, 5:305-399; iniquity, mystery of, 1:164-168, 3:113-139, 232-236, 4:23-24, 5:211-235; Satan and, 3:1-82, 113-139, 209-229, 4:328-331

Milton, John, Paradise Lost, 1:80, 3:293, 394, 5:141-142

Mince Pies for Christmas, Consisting of Riddles, Charades, Transpositions, and Queries (Tabart, 1805), 4:97-101

Miniature books, 1:309, 509 Minor Morals (Smith, C.), 2:381-382, 495

Minor's Magazine, 2:250-251 Miracles, 5:67-69, 257-262. See also Christianity

Mirror for the Female Sex (Pilkington), 2:319-320

Miscellaneous Lessons (Devis), 2:489

Miscellanies. See Anthologies Mitchel, Miss. See Hurry, Ives Monarchy and monarchs, 2:308, 344, 350, 5:422-423; Augustus Caesar, 4:385, 390, 392; Charles II (king of England), 5:422-423; children's fiction, in, 1:72-74, 2:344, 4:101, 103-104; David (king of Judea), 4:217-222; Frederick II (king of Prussia), 1:9, 150, 210; George III (king of England), 1:74-76; Israelites, of, 4:113-141, 209-227; Julius Caesar, 5:416; Louis XVI, (king of France), 3:82-84; Nebuchadnezzar, 3:67-81, 331-332, 5:103-107; Nero, 4:387-388; Solomon, 4:222-224

Montaign, M. de, Tableau d'histoire naturelle; ou nature abrégé des productions les plus utiles des trois règnes de la nature (Dulau, 1800), 4:106 Montolieu, Isabelle, Caroline de Litchfield, 3:385

Moore, John, Zeluco, 2:432 Moral Education (Simons), 4:256-271, 5:3n

Moral Philosophy (Gillet), 3:301-302 Moral Songs (Oakman), 2:245-246 Moral Tales (Edgeworth), 2:425-432 Moral Tales (Soave), 2:125

Moralist (Hamlain, Author of), 1:315-316

Morality: benevolence and, 5:33-34, 267-269; Christian, 2:396-398, 4:341-347, 5:25-42; conscience and, 2:159, 241, 327-328, 5:28-29; education and, 1:144-145, 2:203-209, 324-331, 395-398, 412-415, 3:107-108, 155-158, 177-178, 4:256-271; freethinking and, 2:277-282, 5:25-42; laws of, 3:325; pleasure and, 5:26-28; sensibility and, 5:128-130; virtue and, 1:139-141, 2:451-453, 4:341-347, 420, 425-426, 5:33-38

More, Hannah: 3:91, 255

- Hints towards Forming the Character of a Young Princess, 4:291-294
- Reflections on the Manners of the Great, 3:91
- Sacred Dramas, Chiefly Intended for Young Persons, 1:315-316, 5:176-177, 297; review: 12th cd. (Cadell), 2:498-501
- —Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education, 1:514, 2:29n, 402, 481-485

More Trifles (Sandham), 4:84-89 Morgan, Moral Philosophies, 2:132-135

Moses, 4:3-31, 5:6-12. See Prophecies and Prophets

Most Important Truths and Duties of Christianity Stated. Designed Chiefly for Persons in the Lower Stations of Life (Hatchard, 1804), 3:284

Mother Bunch's Fairy Tales (Aulnoy), 2:185

Mother Goose, 1:62, 215, 2:185-186, 4:74

Mother Shipton's Legacy; or, A Favorite Fortune Book; in Which Is Given a Pleasing Interpretation of Dreams, and a Collection of Prophetic Verses, Moral and Entertaining (1799), 1:430

Mother's Advice to Her Son and Daughter (Lambert, A.), 1:320-323 Mother's Grammar (Fenn), 2:26n, 4:199-200

Mothers: authority of, 1:233-244, 353-362, 5:263-265

books, selection of, 1:2, 306, 2:59-64, 407-410, 4:99; censor-

- ship by, 1:267, 372, 431, 506, 2:170, 184, 4:83, 98-101
- characters of good, 1:487, 4:420, 425-426, 5:410-416
- daughters and, 3:336-342
- duty of, 1:169-183, 279-286, 2:75-76, 154-155, 163-164, 3:1-3, 113, 335-342, 5:152-162, 263-264
- educating: adolescent girls, 1:102-103, 105, 176, 233-236, 348, 415-416, 485-490, 2:400-410, 3:1-82, 113-139, 196-197, 209-229, 305-323, 4:1-31, 113-141, 209-227, 313-340, 5:97-117, 193-235, 305-399, 412-415; children, 1:347-374, 411-422, 482-490, 2:13-30, 32, 82-92, 115, 150-163, 185-186, 191, 210-226, 282-295, 299-302, 331-342, 354, 398-410, 464-481, 3:106-108, 159-164, 263-267, 4:178, 5:154-162; household, 1:280-284; infants, 1:99-106, 169-183, 232-244, 285-298
- fiction, in, 2:235-245, 493, 4:419-420, 5:71-79, 82-88
- love for, 1:176, 348, 351-352
- reading, recommended for, 1:101-102, 2:59-64, 3:107-108, 115-116
- sons and, 2:398-400, 494-495, 3:84-85
- teachers, as, 1:50-51, 2:23, 25, 5:413-414
- toys and, 2:34
- books for, reviews: Fenn, Friend of Mothers, 2:199-200
 Mother's Grammar, 4:26
 Rational Dame, 1:200

Systematical Arrangement, 4:171-172. See also Systems of Education

Mrs. Norton's Story Book (Marshall), 2:363

- Murray, Lindley, Abridgement of Lindley Murray's English Grammar. 7th ed. (Longman), 2:419
 - English Exercises Adapted to the Grammar. 6th ed. (Longman), 2:419
 - English Grammar Adapted to the Different Classes of Learners with an Appendix. 8th ed. (Longman), 2:418-419
 - English Reader. 4th ed. (Longman), 2:419-423
 - English Spelling Book with Reading Lessons Adapted to the Capacities of Children, in Three Parts (Longman, 1804), 4:200-201
 - First Book for Children (Longman, 1804), 4:189-190
 - Lecture Françoise, 2:423n

Museum for Young Gentlemen and Ladies; or, A Private Tutor for Little Masters and Misses. 15th ed. (Darton & Harvey and E. Newbery; Salisbury: B. C. Collins), 2:183

Music, 2:254, 400-401, 3:109-111, 350, 352, 4:414-416, 5:71-74 See also Accomplishments

Mythology: classical, 1:109, 2:296, 4:83; Egyptian, 3:145-146; Hindu, 3:139-147, 229-236; Zoroastrian, 3:143-144

N

Napleton, John, Sermons for the Use

of Colleges, Schools and Families. 2nd ed. (Sael, 1802), 3:185-186, 5:67-69

Natural history: 1:202, 220, 2: 205-206, 287, 407, 495-496, 3:265-266, 4:155, 171-172, 5:286; education, Christian, and, 1:415-416, 501-502, 2:39-40 reviews: E., H., Wonders of the Sea, 3:164-166

— Fenn, Rational Dame, 1:200 Short History of the Bees, 1:523-525

> Systematic Arrangement of the Animal Kingdom, 4:171-172

- Galton, Natural History of Birds, 2:497
- Goldsmith, *Natural History*, 2:116-120
- Holland, Definitions, 4:195-199
- Holloway, *British Museum*, 2:495-497
- Jauffret, Visits to the Menagerie, 1:201-202
- Johnson, R., *Juvenile Rambles*, 1:508-509
- Juvenile Library, 1:316-317
- Library for Youth, 1:309
- Montaign, *Tableau d'histoire* naturelle, 4:106
- Peacock, Visit for a Week, 1:319
- Smith, C., Conversations Introducing Poetry, 4:177-185, 299-301
- Trimmer, M., History of Quadrupeds, 3:284
- Tripp, *Pretty Book of Pictures*, 1:432
- Ventum, Juvenile Instruction, 1:512-513
- Wakefield, Domestic Recreation, 4:402-410; Mental Im-

provement, 1:265-266. See also Science

Nature, 1:415-416, 501-502, 2:39, 117, 207, 287, 358, 366-367, 393-394, 3:97, 165-166, 171-175; great chain of being, 2:268-272

Neale, Hannah, Amusement Hall; or, An Easy Introduction to the Attainment of Useful Knowledge, 2:487

Nebuchadnezzar, 3:67-81, 331-332, 5:103-107. See also Daniel; Monarchs and monarchy

Negative exemplars. See Exemplars, negative

Nelson, Horatio, 1:501-502, 5:95-96 Nero, 4:387-388. See also Monarchy New Children in the Wood (Somerville), 1:300-301

New Dialogues (Kilner, D.), 4:412

New Form of Catechistical Explanation (Sandford), 5:250-262

New Game of Emulation for the Instruction and Amusement of Youth (Harris, 1805), 4:77

New Hieroglyphical Bible, for the Amusement and Instruction of Children...Recommended by the Rev. Rowland Hill (Thompson), 1:381-391

New Introduction to Reading (Sael), 5:93-94

New Method of Instruction (Genlis), 3:150-159

New Robinson Crusoe (Campe), 3:356-360

Newbery, John, 1:63, 436, 437, 442, 500, 5:54

Newton, Isaac, 1:220, 446, 2:196, 393, 5:117. See also Philosophy

Newtonian System of Philosophy (Magnet), 1:441-442

Noah, 3:324-335

Noesselt, 5:30

Nott, Rev. George Frederick, Sermons Preached at Oxford in the Year 1802, at the Bampton Lecture; On Religious Enthusiasm, 4:40-52

Nouvelle Héloise (Rousseau), 1:138-141

Novels, 1:63, 513, 2:381, 3:82, 395,

- alternatives for, 5:82
- children, effects upon, 3:82, 166-167, 298-299
- defined, 1:327-328
- Fielding, Henry, Joseph Andrews, 3:396, Tom Jones, 2:100, 441
- Goethe, Werther, 1:77-80, 318
- instruction and, 4:382-384, 5: 426-427
- Rousseau, *Nouvelle Héloise*, 1:138-141
- Santillane, Gil Blas, 2:100
- Sterne, Laurence, 4:92
- reviews: Adventures of Kamoula, 1:319-320
- Enchanted Mirror, 1:440
- Genlis, Age of Chivalry, 2:433-444
- Happy Family, 2:263
- History of Jack and His Eleven Brothers, 1:426-427
- History of Little King Skilful, 2:250-251
- Johnson, R., Foundling, 1:504
- Julius, 1:438-439
- Kotzebue, Guardian Angel, 1:317-318
- Pilkington, Edward Barnard, 1:198; Tales of the Hermitage, 1:123

- S., E., Gertrude, Agnes, Melite and Amelia Douglas, 3:166-167
- Sanders, Edmund, 1:125
- Sandham, Twin Sisters, 5:70-79
- Smith, T., Shepherd's Son, 1:324-325
- Somerville, New Children in the Wood, 1:300-301
- Ventum, *Amiable Tutoress*, 1:324. See Also Fiction
- Nursery maids, 1:238, 430; children and, 1:181, 241-242, 371-372, 2:35
 - responsibilities of, 1:181-182, 190, 232-233, 370-371
 - selection and supervision of, 1:285-286
 - books for, reviews: Fenn, Some Hints to Young Women, 1:514-515. See also Servants
- Nursery rhymes: 1:372, 4:413-414; review: Martin, Comic Adventures of Old Mother Hubbard, 4:413-414
- Nursery Tales. Cinderella, Blue Beard, Little Red Riding Hood (Tabart, 1804), 4:74-75

0

- Oakman, John, Moral Songs for the Instruction and Amusement of Children, Intended as a Companion to Dr. Watts's "Divine Songs" (Darton & Harvey), 2:245-246
- Obedience: 1:236-244, 353-362, 378-381, 418-419, 2:13-30, 93-97, 418. See also Authority; Duty
- Observations on Charity Schools (Cappe), 4:201-205

- "Observations on Some of Mr. Locke's Rules in His Book on Education" (*Thoughts on the Education*, Author of), 3:159-164, 263-267
- "Observations on the Changes Which Have Taken Place in Books for Children and Young Persons" (Trimmer, S.), 1:1-16, 61-66
- "Observations upon Pope's Essay on Man" (Trimmer, S.), 2:257-272, 321-324, 385-395, 449-454
- Obsolete Ideas; in Six Letters, Addressed to Maria, by a Friend (Seeley, 1805), 5:186-191
- Old maids, 5:187-191. See also Women
- "On Old Age" (Roland), 1:84-91
 "On Freethinking" (Genlis), 2:193197
- "On the Excellence of Christianity" (Beattie), 4:205-208
- "On the Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity" (Waterland), 4:144-153, 237-244
- "On the Lord's Day" (RTS, no. XIV), 4:160
- "On the Reverence Due to Old Age" (Partridge), 2:249-250
- "On the Superiority of Morality, as Known in Our Days, over That of the Antient Philosophers" (Gellert), 4:341-347, 5:25-42
- Oracles (Jones, S.), 1:507
- Original Poems (Taylor, A. and J.), 4:77-82, 410-412
- Orphan Heiress of Sir Gregory, 5:148-149
- Owen, John, *The Fashionable World Displayed*, 4:426-432

P

- P., M. (pseud.). See Kilner, Dorothy P., O., correspondent, "Cinderella," 2:448
- Pacha de Surenne (Picard), 2:256Paine, Thomas, Rights of Man, 1:74, 143, 5:163, 259. See also Freethinking
- Painter, Peter, Picture Room, Containing the Original Drawings of Eighteen Little Masters and Misses (York: Wilson & Spence, 1800), 1:500-502
- Palace of Enchantment; or, Entertaining and Instructive Fairy Tales (Lane, 1804), 4:94-95
- Paltock, Robert, Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins (Newbery, 1800), 1:432
- Parental Education (Kendall), 2:100-106, 4:96
- Parental Monitor (Bonhote), 3:389-395

Parents: 1:297-298

- -- authority of, 1:233-244, 352-362, 378-381, 418-419, 3:266, 5:263-266
- books for, 1:63-65
- --- characters of good, 1:233-234, 279-284, 507, 2:508, 3:106, 4:96
- -- duties of, 1:27-34, 169-183, 348-349, 2:76-78
- education, role in, 1:2, 12-13, 25-26, 67, 169-183, 2:76-78, 184-185
- -- fathers: characters of, 1:466-470, 4:205-208, 5:42-44, 411 children and, 1:293-297, 361-362, 3:263, 4:191-193, 5:263

duties of, 2:22-24 education, Christian, role in, 2:22-23 fiction, in, 3:357-359, 385 — godparents, 1:37-48 - infants and, 1:100-101 — love for, 1:297-298, 2:164-165 - mothers: authority of, 1:233-244, 353-362, 5:263-265 books, selection of, 1:2, 306, 2:59-64, 407-410, 4:99 books, censorship by, 1:267, 372, 431, 506, 2:170, 184, 4:83, 98-101 character of good, 1:487, 4:420, 425-426, 5:410-416 daughters and, 3:336-342 duty of, 1:169-183, 279-286, 2:75-76, 154-155, 163-164, 3:1-3, 113, 335-342, 5:152-162, 263-264 educating: adolescent girls, 1:102-103, 105, 176, 233-236, 348, 415-416, 485-490, 2:400-410, 3:1-82, 113-139, 196-197, 209-229, 305-323, 4:1-31, 113-141, 209-227, 313-340, 5:97-117, 193-235, 305-399, 412-415, children, 1:347-374, 411-422, 482-490, 2:13-30, 32, 82-92, 115, 150-163, 185-186, 191, 210-226, 282-295, 299-302, 331-342, 354, 398-410, 464-481, 3:106-108, 159-164, 263-267, 4:178, 5:154-162; household, 1:280-284; infants, 1:99-106, 169-183, 232-244, 285-298

fiction, in, 2:235-245, 493, 4:419-420, 5:71-79, 82-88 love for, 1:176, 348, 351-352 reading, recommended for, 1:101-102, 2:59-64, 3:106-108, 115-116 sons and, 2:398-400, 494-495, 3:84-85 teachers, as, 1:50-51, 2:23, 25, 5:413-414 toys and, 2:34 books for, reviews: Bonhote, Parental Monitor, 3:389-395. See also Systems of Education Parent's Assistant (Edgeworth), 2:253-260, 415-418 Parents' Friend; or, Extracts from the Principal Works on Education, from the Time of Montaigne to the Present, with Observations and Notes by the Editor. 2 v. (Johnson, 1802), 3:254-259 Parlor games. See Riddles Parnell, Thomas, 3:167 Parsing Lessons (Fenn), 2:26n, 4:200 Partridge, Samuel, "On the Reverence Due to Old Age. A Sermon Preached in the Parish Church of Boston, August 15, 1802." 2nd ed. (Rickaby), 2:249-250 Passions: control of, 1:375-376, 2:92-93, 200-202, 219-226, 265, 3:266; ruling passion, 2:322-324 Paternal Present (Pratt), 1:306 Paul and Virginia (Saint-Pierre), 2:369-371 Paul, Saint, 4:389-390 Peacock, Lucy, Little Emigrant (Printed for the author at the Juvenile Library, 1799), 1:198

- Six Princesses of Babylon. 2nd ed. (1804), 4:173
- Visit for a Week. 5th cd. (Harris, 1802), 1:319

Pearson, Edward, "Admonition against Lay Preaching" (Hatchard), 5:94

- "Plain Reasons against Separating from the Established Church" (Hatchard), 5:94
- "Plain Reasons for the Practice of Infant Baptism" (Hatchard), 5:94

Petham, M. (pseud.). See Kilner, Dorothy

Penmanship. See Writing

Pennington, Lady Sarah, Unfortunate Mother's Advice to Her Absent Daughters. New ed. (Hatchard, 1802), 1:325-327

"Pentitent Prostitute" (RTS, no. XLII), 5:163

Periodicals, 4:278; reviews: *Juvenile Library*, 1:316-317; *Minor's Magazine*, 2:250-251

Perrault, Charles, Histories and Tales of Past Times, Told by Mother Goose (B. Collins and E. Newbery, 1799), 2:185-186

"Persuasive to Public Worship" (RTS, no. XV), 4:160-166

Philanthropic societies: Endeavour Society, 2:245, 4:61; Religious Tract Society, 4:52-58, 156-166, 294-297, 392-400, 5:48-53, 163-167, 271-276; Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor, 3:251-254, 262; Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2:153, 4:58-62; Society for the Suppression of Vice, 2:127-128, 3:148-150, 5:96. See also Charity

Philanthropines, 1:13-14, 16-17, 2:141n, 174, 4:248. See also Schools

Philobiblios, correspondent, 4:208, "Concerning Novels," 5:426-427

Philosophy and philosophers: ancient, 4:341-347, 384-392; Bacon, Francis, 4:248-249, 251-252, 369, 5:134n; Bolingbroke, Henry St. John, 2:257-272, 321-324, 385-395, 449-454; Burke, Edmund, 1:74-75; Herbert of Cherbury, Edward, lord, 2:67; Hobbes, Thomas, 2:68; Hume, David, 1:149, 2:1-13, 55, 208-209, 4:292-294, 5:259-261; Locke, John, 1:62, 299, 5:130; Thoughts Concerning Education, 1:8-9, 3:159-164, 263-267; moral, 2:202-209; Newton, Isaac, 1:220, 446, 2:196, 393, 5:117; Plato, 4:342-344; Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 2:330, 4:92-93, 369-370, 5:283-284; education, and, 1:144, 182, 2:343, 3:94, 356-357, 361; Émile, 1:120, 184-191, 374-381, 5:283-284; Nouvelle Héloise, 1:138-141; Socrates, 4:341-346. See also Freethinking

Picard, *Pacha de Surenne*, 2:256 Picture books: 2:485; reviews: Darton, *Chapters of Accidents*, 1:509

- Prize of Youthful Obedience, 2:485-487
- Tagg, Collection of Pretty Poems, 1:428-429
- Trifles for Children, 1:429-430
- Tripp, Pretty Book of Pictures,1:432. See also Illustration

Picture of London, 4:174
Picture Room (Painter), 1:500-502
Piety. See Devotion

- Pilgrim's Progress (Bunyan), 1:92, 4:159
- Pilkington, Mary, Asiatic Princess. 2 v. (Vernor & Hood and E. Newbery, 1800), 1:425
 - Edward Barnard, or, Merit Exalted (Newbery, 1797), 1: 198
 - Goldsmith's Natural History; Abridged for the Use of Schools by Mrs. Pilkington (Vernor & Hood, 1803), 2:116-120
 - Marvellous Adventures; or, The Vicissitudes of a Cat (Vernor & Hood and J. Harris, 1802), 1:303
 - Mentorial Tales, for the Instruction of Young Ladies (Harris, 1802), 1:437-438
 - Mirror for the Female Sex. Historical Beauties for Young Ladies; Designed Principally for the Use of Ladies' Schools (Vernor & Hood and E. Newbery, 1798), 2:319-320
 - Tales of the Cottage (Vernor & Hood, 1800), 1:302-303
 - Tales of the Hermitage (Vernor & Hood, 1800), 1:123
- Pinchard, Elizabeth, *Blind Child; or, Anecdotes of the Wyndham Family.* 6th ed. (Harris, 1802), 2:493
 - *Dramatic Dialogues* (Newbery, 1792), 2:446-447
- Two Cousins (Harris), 1:441 Pindar, Peter, 5:425 "Pious and Exemplary Death of a Young Lady" (M., A., correspondent), 2:382-384

Pity's Gift (Pratt), 1:304-306

- Plain and Easy Introduction to the Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion, with a Comprehensive View of the Reasonableness of the Christian Dispensation. By a Clergyman of the Church of England. 2 v. (Rivingtons), 1:310-312
- "Plain Reasons against Separating from the Established Church" (Pearson), 5:94
- "Plain Reasons for the Practice of Infant Baptism" (Pearson), 5:94 Plato, 4:342-343, 344. See also Philosophy and Philosophers Play: 1:355, 421-422, 2:36-39, 3:350,

4:77

- amusement necessary, 1:449, 2:18, 28, 293, 4:99, 413-414
- education, role in, 2:18-19, 28-29, 36-37, 3:155-158, 4:23, 301-303, 5:263-265
- games, 1:301-302, 2:19-20, 435-436, 3:155-158, 258-259, 4:301-303
- gender differentiation, 3:257,
 5:159-160
 dolls and, 2:33-34, 429,
 3:169-170, 257, 4:413
 games and, 3:155-158, 258289, 4:301-303
- toys, 2:30-35, 344, 3:163, 257-259, 4:77 board games, 3:257, 4:77 Bureau Typographique, 2:19-20
 - dolls, 2:33-34, 429, 3:157-158, 169-170, 257, 4:413 playing cards, 1:301, 391n, 3:258-259
 - Sabbath observance and, 3:349-353

teaching aids as, 1:62, 242-244, 421-422, 2:19-20, 49

Playful, Pat, Take Your Choice; or, The Difference between Virtue and Vice Shown in Opposite Characters (Harris, 1802), 1:197-198

Playing cards, 1:301, 391n, 3:258-259 Plays. See Drama

Pleasing Moralist (Winlove), 1:433-434

Pleasure, 2:163-164, 5:26-28 Plumbtre, Annabella. See Plumptre,

Plumbtre, Annabella. See Plumptre Annabella

Plumbtre, Charles, Christian Guide; or, An Attempt to Explain in a Series of Connected Discourses, the Leading Articles of Christianity (Rivington, 1802), 3:186-187

Plumptre, Annabella, Stories for Children, Intended to Be Read or Recited to Them in the Early Period of Infancy (Mawman, 1804), 3:168-170

Plumptre, James, Collection of Songs, Moral, Sentimental, Instructive and Amusing...the Music Adapted and Composed by Charles Hayne (Rivingtons, 1805), 4:414-416

Plunkett, Elizabeth (Gunning), Village Library (Crosby & Co., 1802), 1:318-319

Poetical Monitor (Hill, Mrs.), 1:130-132

Poetry: animals in, 4:416-426; children's, 2:45-46, 246, 3:285-294, 4:77; criticism of, 3:285-294; education and, 2:289-291; *Guardian of Education*, contributions to, 5:42-44; morals and precepts in, 4:77-82, 410-412, 417-426, 5:186; nursery rhymes, 1:372, 4:413-414;

sacred, 2:289-292, 3:287-290, 293-294; talent for, 5:185-186; reviews: Aikin, L., *Poetry for Children*, 1:307

- Aphorisms for Youth, 4:90-94

- Bisset, Geographical Guide, 4:75-77
- Bowdler, Jane, Poems and Essays, 3:198-199
- Choice Collection of Hymns, 1:511-512
- Doddridge, "Principles of the Christian Religion," 4:294-295
- Gessner, Death of Abel, 1:203-207
- Hayley, Ballads, 4:416-426
- Mother Shipton's Legacy, 1:430
- Oakman, Moral Songs, 2:245-246
- Plumptre, Collection of Songs, 4:414-416
- Richardson, C., Poems, 5:180-186
- Smith, C., Conversations Introducing Poetry, 4:177-185, 299-301 Rambles Further, 2:381 Rural Walks, 2:381, 495
- Tagg, Collection of Pretty Poems, 1:428-429
- Taylor, A. and J., Original Poems, 4:77-82, 410-412
- Watts, Divine Songs, 4:158; Hymns and Moral Songs, 2:360-363
- West, Poems and Plays, 4:308-312
- Wynne, Amusing and Instructive Tales, 1:425

Polite Academy; or, School of Behavior for Young Gentlemen and Ladies. Intended as a Foundation for Good Manners and Polite Address. 10th ed. (Darton & Harvey), 2:113-114

Poor Child's Friend (G., H.), 2:50 Pope, Alexander, "Eloisa to Abelard," 3:291-293; Essay on Man, 2:257-272, 321-324, 385-395, 449-454, 4:199, 423; "Universal Prayer," 2:184, 2:454-461

Porter, Jane, *Two Princes of Persia* (Crosby and Letterman and Tabart, 1801), 1:132-133

Practical Education (Edgeworth, R. and M.), 1:306n, 373-374, 490-498, 2:30-43, 92-101, 163-171, 341n, 5:158-160

Practical Observations on the Revelation of St. John (Bowdler, E.), 3: 195-197

Praise, 1:317, 5:60-62, 409-410. See also Rewards and Punishments

Pratt, Samuel Jackson, Paternal Present, Being a Sequel to "Pity's Gift" (Longman, Rees and Harris, 1802), 1:306; Pity's Gift. 3rd ed. (Longman, Rees and Newbery, 1801), 1:304-306

Prayers, 1:110, 2:89-90, 3:359-360; Apostles' Creed, 1:9, 2:155; for ehildren, 1:241, 417-420; grace, 1:420, 3:180-185, 5:132-135; Lord's Prayer, 1:5, 9, 110, 2:151-152, 158-159; Pope, Alexander, "Universal Prayer," 2:184, 454-461; reviews: Good Effects of Sincere and Constant Prayer, 2:447-448

- "Prayers for Children," 2:245
- "Short Prayers for Every Evening," 5:53
- "Short Prayers for Every Morning," 5:51-53
- Watts, Hynns and Moral Songs
 ...to Which Are Added Prayers,
 2:360-363. See also Devotion

"Prayers for Children, Selected from the Church Catechism, for Private Persons and Families or Schools. By a Member of the Endeavor Society" (Endeavor Society), 2:245 Predestination, 1:344-347, 408-411, 521-525, 2:466-467. See also Calvinism

Prejudice: authority, against, 1:115-118, 122, 431, 434-435, 507, 2:307-310, 3:384-385, 4:169; education and, 1:85, 2:189-190, 215-218, 281; religion, against, 1:57, 322-323

Preludes to Knowledge (Somerville), 4:166-169

"Present for Youth" (Rietrie), 1:515-523

Presents for Good Boys (Fenwick), 4:413

Presents for Good Girls (Fenwick), 4:413

Prettiest Book for Children (Bunyano), 1:437

Pretty Book of Pictures for Little Masters and Misses (Trip), 1:432 Pretty Pilgrim; or, The Marvelous

Journey of Evelina Evans (Crosby, 1803), 3:167

Pride, 1:289-291, 2:168-169, 239 Priestley, Joseph, 3:352, 356. See also

Freethinkers
"Primeval Religion of the Hindoos,"

(Jones, Sir W.), 3:229-236

Primitivism 1:200 300 2:102-106

Primitivism, 1:299-300, 2:102-106, 369, 3:94

"Principles of the Christian Religion" (Doddridge), 4:294-295

Prints, 2:22-24, 296-297, 3:268. See also Illustration

Prior, Matthew, 3:288-290

"Private Confession of Faith, of a

Christian" (M., A., correspondent), 5:243-250

Prize of Youthful Obedience. 2 pts. (Darton & Harvey), 2:485-487 Prodigies, 3:151-152. See also Education

Professions, 1:462-464. See also Education

Progress of the Pilgrim Good Intent (Burges), 1:91-99, 158-162

Progressive Instructions in Reading (Wilmshurst), 2:114-116

Pronouncing Spelling Book (Wilmshurst), 2:116

Prophecies and prophets: Daniel, 3:67-68, 4:331-332, 5:103-107; Jesus, 4:314-340, 5:107-117, 251-262; Moses, 4:26-31; Revelations, 5:305-399; Samuel, 4:209-217; symbolic language of, 5:117-128. See also Millenium

"Prospectus of an Intended Publication of a Collection of Gazettes, Announcing the Great Naval Victories, during the Late and Present Wars," 5:95-96. See also War

Proverbs: 1:455, 457, 2:291, 4:90-91, 195-199; reviews: *Aphorisms for Youth*, 4:90-94

- Holland, Definitions, 4:195-199

— Wisdom in Miniature, 1:499-500 Providence, 1:328-330, 426-427, 2:185, 488-489; national, 2:292-293, 5:98-103

Punch and Judy, 1:144

Punishment. See Rewards and Punishments

Puzzle for a Curious Girl (W., S.), 2:112-113

Puzzling Cap. A Choice Collection of Riddles (Harris, 1802), 1:506

Q

Quintillian, 2:16-18, 21

R

R., P., correspondent, "Professional Education for Sons," 1:461-464, 2:128, 384

Rambles Further (Smith, C.), 2:381 Rational Amusement (Hurry), 4:73 Rational Brutes (Kilner, D.), 1:309 Rational Dame (Fenn), 1:200 Rational Dialogues (Lane, 1799), 3:383-389

Readers. See Reading and readers Reading and readers: 2:150-152, 160, 420-422

- children, effects upon, 1:391-392, 394-395, 430, 520-523
- elocution, 2:420-422
- freethinking and, 1:138-144, 2:482-484
- leisure, 1:62, 72, 409-410, 2:183, 190
- list, of a boy aged 14, 5:415-417; of a girl, aged 18, 5:139-151
- recommended, for children ages 8 to 12, 2:407-410 for girls, 3:114-116 for mothers, 3:107-108 for school teachers, 2:229
- readers, 4:482-484. See also reviews following
- teaching of 2:19-22, 4:304-307 alphabets, 1:62, 2:19, 4:379

Bureau Typographique, 2:19-20

hornbooks, 1:5. See also Books

- reviews: Barbauld, *Lessons*, 2:43-45
- Child's Delight, 1:505
- Creswick, Lady's Preceptor, 2:490-491
- Devis, Miscellaneous Lessons, 2:489
- Fenn, Cobwebs to Catch Flies, 1:124-125 Family Miscellany, 5:56-57 Friend of Mothers, 2:49 Infant's Friend, 2:48
- Fenwick, Mary and Her Cat, 4:412-413

Presents for Good Boys, 4:413

Presents for Good Girls, 4:413

- Guppy, Instructive and Entertaining Dialogues, 3:375-376
- Kilner, D., Good Child's Delight, 1:123-124; Little Stories, 1:123-124
- Kilner, M., Familiar Dialogues, 1:124
- Murray, English Reader, 2:419-423

English Spelling Book, 4:200-201

First Book, 4:189-190

- Prize of Youthful Obedience, 2:485-487
- Sacl, New Introduction to the Art of Reading, 5:93-94
- Somerville, Leading Strings, 5:297

- Wilmshurst, Progressive Instructions, 2:114-11; Pronouncing Spelling Book, 2:116. See also Picture Books; Schoolbooks
- Reason: children, of, 2:37-38, 202-209; children, reasoning with, 1:355, 2:131-132, 204-209, 214-217, 408-409, 3:266, 363-372, 5:265-266; limits of, 1:225-226, 262-263, 278-279, 3:86-88, 4:369-370, 5:31-42; pride in, 2:268; religion and, 1:22-26

Rebuses, 1:381-391. See also Illustration

Redemption, 2:83-92, 276, 3:281-283, 4:312-340, 5:35-38, 97-117

Rees, W. J., Short and Practical Account of the Principal Duties of Christianity. 2nd ed. (Sael, 1804), 4:195

Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex (Wakefield), 3:259-263

"Reflections on the Present Times" (Hatchard, 1804), 3:294-296

Regeneration, 4:392-393, 397-400, 5:52-53

Religious Tract Society (RTS), 4:52-58, 156-166, 294-297, 392-400, 5: 48-53, 163-167, 271-276. See also Philanthropic Societies

Remarks on Modern Female Manners (Bowles), 1:513-514

Remarks on the Uses of the Definite Article (Sharpe), 3:98-105, 116

"Remember the Sabbath Day and Keep It Holy" (RTS, no. VII), 4:158

Renowned History of Primrose Pretty Face (Newbery), 1:436

Renowned History of the White Cat (Aulnoy), 1:432

"Repentance and Happy Death of the Celebrated Earl of Rochester" (Burnet), 4:159

Reprobation, 2:466-467. See also Calvinism

Resolves, Divine, Moral and Political (Felltham), 5:404-410

Restoration (1660), 1:6, 153, 5:423

Revelation, 3:229-233. See also Christianity

Rewards and punishments, 1:305, 355-360, 2:165-168, 236, 242-243, 3:162-164, 266, 5:59-62, 263-264

- praise, 5:409-410
- school, at, 4:373-376
- terror, 1:370-372

Reynolds, "Subjects for Consideration Extracted from Reynold's Compassionate Address" (RTS, no. III), 4:157

Richardson, Charlotte, *Poems Written on Different Occasions...Editor Catherine Cappe* (Johnson, 1806), 5:180-186; subscription for, 4:433-436, 5:427-428

Richardson, Samuel, Clarissa, 1:140; Correspondence, 5:148; Sir Charles Grandisson, 3:387

Richmond, Legh, "Sermon on the Sin of Cruelty towards the Brute Creation, Preached at the Abbey Church at Bath, February 15, 1801" (Hatchard), 2:249

Rictrie, "Present for Youth; or, A Short and Pleasing Account of the Happy Effects of Divine Grace on the Minds of Four Young Persons Extracted by Permission from Rictrie's Narrative of the Lives of Young Persons" (Griffiths), 1:515-523

Riddles, reviews: *Mince Pies*, 4:97-101

- Puzzling Cap, 1:506
- Thumb, *Bag of Nuts*, 1:504. See also Games

Ridley, James, *Tales of the Genii*, 2:408

Roberts, Eliza, Geography and History, Selected by a Lady for the Use of Her Own Children. 5th ed. (Law), 2:490

Roberts, Margaret, Telescope; or, Moral Views for Children (Darton & Harvey, 1804), 4:82-83

Robin Goodfellow, a Fairy Tale (Newbery, 1800), 1:504

Robinsonades, reviews: Campe, New Robinson Crusoe, 3:356-360

- Defoe, Robinson Crusoe, 3:297-300
- Paltock, Life of Peter Wilkins,1:432. See also Fiction

Rochester, Earl of, 4:158

Roland, Mme., death of, 1:88-89, 334-336; "Extract from a Manuscript on Old Age... Taken from Her Works Published in English, 1800," 1:84-91

Rollin, Charles, Ancient History, 2:293, 407; Belles Lettres, 1:495, 497-498, 2:16-30, 211-219, 4:277; Essay on Christian Education, 2:90, 3:255

Roman History (Adams), 5:93

Romances: 1:246; reviews: *Beautiful Page*, 1:303-304

- Enchanted Mirror, 1:440

— Valentine and Orson, 4:75. See also Fiction

Rome, 4:384-392

Rosamond (Edgeworth, M.), 2:235-239

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques: 2:330, 4:92-93, 369-370, 5:283-284; education, philosophy of, 1:144, 182, 2:343, 3:94, 356-357, 361; Émile, 1:120, 184-191, 374-381, 5:283-284; Nouvelle Héloise, 1:138-141

Rural Felicity (Johnson, R.), 1:506-507

Rural Philosophy (Bates), 5:128-135 Rural Walks (Smith, C.), 2:381, 495

S

- S., E., Cup of Sweets That Can Never Cloy (Harris, 1804), 3:166
 - Gertrude, Agnes, Melite, and Amelia Douglass (Harris, 1804), 3:166-167
 - Interesting Tales...Translated from the French (Vernor & Hood and J. Harris, 1805), 4:194-195
- S., M., Letters from a Mother to Her Daughter on Religious and Moral Subjects (Rivingtons, 1806), 5:425-426
- S., Maria, correspondent, "Extract from Solomon Saunter's *Literary Leisures*, XIII," 1:141-144
- S., S. (pseud.). See Kilner, Mary Sabbath observance: 3:204-207, 315-316, 329, 349-353, 4:160-165, 394, 5:48-50; children and, 1:411-422, 2:331-342, 3:347-353; decline of,

- 1:7; music and, 3:109-112; reading for, 2:125-127
- books for: Kilner, M., Course of Lectures, 2:54, 5:88-93
- "On the Lord's Day," 4:160
- "Persuasive to Public Worship," 4:160-166
- "Remember the Sabbath Day," 4:158
- Somerville, Sacred Lectures, 3:268-273
- Sunday Miscellany, 3:167-168. See also Devotion

Sacraments: baptism, 1:34-49, 169-183, 482-490, 2:82-83, 4:156-157, 165, 392-393, 397-400, 5:52-53; confirmation, 2:464-481; education and, 1:34-49, 3:272-273, 5:12-22; Holy Communion, 1:327, 337-344, 401-407, 470-479, 2:464-481, 3:202-203, 4:156-157, 5:165-167, 273-282

Sacred Dramas. See Collet, John; Genlis, Stephanie; More, Hannah

Sacred Exhibition (Kilner, M.), 1:450-455

Sacred Histories (Godwin), 3:372-375

Sacred Hours; or, Extracts for Private Devotion and Meditation, Comprehending the Psalms, Arranged and Classed under Various Heads... Principally Selected from the Scripture. 2 v. (Ginger), 3:179-185

Sacred Lectures (Somerville), 3:268-273

Sacrifices, 2:317-319, 3:122, 130, 233-236, 312-315, 4:11-13

Sact, George, New Introduction to Reading; or, A Collection of Essays,

- Poems, Moral Sentences, &c. for the Improvement of Youth (Never before Selected) Designed for the Higher Classes of Schools. 8th ed. v. 2. (Sael, 1805), 5:93-94
- Saint-Pierre, Jacques Henri Bernardin de, *Indian Cottage*, 2:358; review: Translated by E. A. Kendall (Vernor & Hood; Darton & Harvey, 1800), 2:364-369
 - Paul and Virginia. Translated by Helen Maria Williams (Vernor & Hood), 2:369-371
 - —Studies of Nature, 2:229, 432, 4:301
- Samuel, 4:208-216. See also Prophecies and Prophets
- Sanders, Charlotte, Edmund, a Tale for Children (Mawman, 1802), 1:125; Holidays at Home; Written for the Amusement of Young Persons (Mawman; York: Wilson and Spence, 1803), 4:89-90
- Sandford, Rev. William, New Form of Catechistical Explanation of the Grounds and Chief Precepts of the Christian Doctrine. 2nd ed. (Rivingtons, 1806), 5:250-262
- Sandham, Elizabeth, Addresses of an Affectionate Mother to Her Children, 2:423-424
 - More Trifles, for the Benefit of the Rising Generation (Harris, 1804), 4:84-89
 - Trifles; or, Friendly Mites (Hurst, 1800), 1:427-428
 - Twin Sisters; or, The Advantages of Religion (Harris, 1805), 5:70-79

Santillaine, Gil Blas, 2:100

- Satan, 3:1-82, 113-139, 209-229, 4:328-331. See also Millenium
- Saunter, Solomon (pseud.). See Clarke, Hewson
- School stories, reviews: Fielding, S., *Governess* 1:137-138
 - The Governess; or, Evening Amusements, 2:488-489
 - History of a School-Boy, 1:434-435
 - History of Master Jackey, 1:505
 - Johnson, R., Tea-Table Dialogues, 1:308
 - Kilner, D., First Going to School, 4:412
 - Tales of the Arbour, 1:198-200
 - Village School, 1:123-124.

 See also Fiction
- Schools: charity, 1:8n, 130-131, 4:201-205, 370-382, 5:185; Columbia College, New York, 4:155; deaf, for, 1:439-440n; failure to teach religion, 1:11-13, 113; Ladies' School of St. Sepulchre's Parish, London, 3:304; Male Asylum at Egmore, Madras, India, 4:371-382; philanthropines, 1:13-14, 16-17, 2:141n, 174, 4:248; public, 1:110-118, 192-197, 2:430; schoolbooks, 2:409, 3:301, 4:102-103. See also reviews following; Sunday, 5:58-66; William's academy at Chelsea, 2:410-415
 - books for, reviews: Adams, Roman History, 5:93
 - Butler, Arithmetical Questions, 4:101-104
 - Cappe, Observations on Charity Schools, 4:201-205
 - Devis, Accidence, 3:303
 - Diatessarion, 1:509-511, 3:188-189

- Elements of Astronomy, 3:302
- Fenn, Series of Grammatical Knowledge, 4:199-200
- Giles, English Parsing, 4:105
- Gillet, Moral Philosophy, 3:301-302
- Goldsmith, *Natural History*, 2: 116-120
- Grant, Manual of Religious Knowledge, 5:57-66
- Hill, Mrs., Poetical Monitor, 1: 130-132
- Holland, Definitions, 4:195-199
- Juvenile Stories and Dialogues, 1:502-503
- Mangnall, Historical and Miscellaneous Questions, 5:192
- Montaign, Tableau d'histoire naturelle, 4:106
- Murray, English Exercises, 2:419; English Spelling Book, 4:200-201
- Napleton, *Sermons*, 3:185-186, 5:67-69
- Sacl, New Introduction to Reading, 5:93-94
- Sunday Miscellany, 3:167-168
- Taylor, *Useful Arithmetic*, 3: 302-303
- Wilmshurst, Progressive Lessons, 2:114-116
- Wilson, *Brief Compendium*, 4:104-105.
- See also Picture Books; Reading and Readers
- Science: education and, 1:441-442, 491-492, 2:35, 37-40, 225-226, 305-306, 310, 407-408; freethinking and 1:207-208; geology, 1:271, 2:272;

- religion and, 1:219-222, 3: 301-302, 4:154-155
- reviews: Aikin, *Evenings at Home*, 2:304-311, 343-353
- Circle of the Sciences, 5:423
- E., H., Natural History of the Earth, 1:271-272
- Elements of Astronomy. and Natural Philosophy, 3:302
- Elements of Natural Philosophy, 5:88
- First Elements of Astronomy, 4:169-171
- Frend, Evening Amusements, 3:96-97
- Joyce, Scientific Dialogues, 1: 306-307
- Library for Youth, 1:309
- Magnet, Newtonian System of Philosophy, 1:441-442
- Smith, T., Universal Atlas, 1:207-208
- Somerville, *Preludes to Knowledge*, 4:166-169
- Wakefield, *Domestic Recreation*, 4:402-410. See also Natural History
- Scientific Dialogues (Joyce), 1:306-307
- Scotfield, William (pseud.). See Godwin, William
- Scripture Biography (Watkins), 1:269-270, 2:124n
- Scripture history. See Bible, historical books
- Scripture Prints (Trimmer, S.), 2:161 "Season of Scarcity" (RTS, no. XX), 4:296
- Second Chapter of Accidents (Darton), 1:509

- "Second Dialogue Concerning Christian Edification" (SPCK), 4:60 Sectarianism, 2:251-252, 349-350 Select Fables (Florian), 5:423-424 Select Passages (Short History of Insects, Author of), 4:432-433 Sensibility, 2:438-439, 5:128-130. See
- Sensibility, 2:438-439, 5:128-130. See also Benevolence
- Sequel to Moral Education (Simons), 4:256-271
- Sequel to the Essay on Christian Education (Trimmer, S.), 3:1-82, 113-139, 209-229, 305-323, 4:1-31, 113-141, 209-227, 313-340, 5:97-117, 193-235, 305-399
- "Sermon on the Character of a Good Christian" (L., P., correspondent), 2:511-517
- "Sermon on the Duties of Parents to Children" (Willis), 1:27-34
- "Sermon on the Pleasures of Heavenly Mindedness" (Jones, Rev. W.), 5:300-304
- "Sermon Preached at Oxford" (Nott), 4:40-52
- Sermons, 5:62-63; reviews: Napleton, Sermons for the Use of Colleges, 3:185-186, 5:67-69
 - Partridge, "On the Reverence Due to Old Age," 2:249-250
 - Richmond, "Sermon on the Sin of Cruelty," 2:249
 - "Sixteen Short Sermons," 5:51
 - Wilkinson, Sermons to Children, 1:512
- Sermons on the Doctrines and Duties of Christianity, Addressed to a Country Congregation. 3rd ed. (Cadell, 1802), 2:125-127

- Servants: 1:281-284, 294, 2:41-42, 164, 357, 5:158; children's fiction, in, 2:357; clothing, 3:297, 4:203-205; duty, 2:42; nursery maids, 1:181-182, 190, 232-233, 238, 241-242, 285-286, 370-372, 430, 2:35; books for, reviews: "Friendly Hints," 4:159
 - Hanway, *Domestic Happiness*, 2:493-494
 - Sherwood, History of Susan Gray, 1:267-268. See also Lower Classes

Sex, 2:369, 5:58-59

Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper, 2:70-71, 4:45n

- Sharpe, Granville, Remarks on the Uses of the Definite Article in the Greek Text of the New Testament. 3rd ed. (Hatchard), 3:98-105
- Shepherd's Son (Smith, T.), 1:324-325
- Sherwood, Mary, History of Susan Gray, as Related by a Clergyman, for the Benefit of Young Women Going into Service, 1:393, 2:358; review: (Bath: Hazard; London: Spragg, 1802), 1:267-268
- "Short Abstract of Dr. Kipling's Pamphlet on Calvinism," (Anonymous correspondent), 2:59-64
- Short and Practical Account (Rees), 4:195
- Short Conversations (Kilner, D.), 1:123-124
- Short History of Insects, Author of, Select Passages from Various Authors, Designed to Form the Minds and Manners of Young Persons. 2nd ed. (Ebers), 4:432-433

- Short History of the Ancient Israelites (Fleury), 2:311-319
- Short History of the Bees (Fenn), 1:523-525
- "Short Narrative of the Wonderful and Providential Preservation of King Charles the Second" (Hatchard, 1806), 5:422-423
- "Short Practical Explanation of Our Blessed Saviour's 'Sermon on the Mount'" (Bath: Hazard; Hatchard), 2:246-248
- "Short Prayers for Every Evening in the Week. By a Clergyman of the Church of England" (RTS, no. XL), 5:53
- "Short Prayers for Every Morning in the Week. By a Clergyman of the Church of England" (RTS, no. XXXIX), 5:51-53
- Siamese Tales (Brewer), 2:497-498 Siblings, 1:362-368, 2:430, 3:339, 5:159-160. See also Family
- Sikes, Thomas, "Dialogue between a Minister and His Parishioner," 4:60
- Silver Thimble (Instructive Tales, Author of), 2:184
- Simons, Thomas, Moral Education the One Thing Needful, Briefly Recommended in Four Letters by a Friend (Johnson, 1802), 4:256-271; Sequel to Moral Education the One Thing Needful (Johnson, 1805), 4: 256-271
- Sin: children and, 1:169-183, 234-235, 288-289, 520-522, 2:464-469, 3:92, 4:107; original, 4:165-166, 271
- Sisters, 1:362-368, 2:430, 3:339, 5:159-160. See also Family

- Six Princesses of Babylon (Peacock), 4:173
- "Sixteen Short Sermons. By a Clergyman of the Church of England" (RTS, no. XXXVIII), 5:51
- Sketch of the Denominations (Evans), 2:119, 251-252

Slavery, 2:351-352

Sleep, 3:161-162

- Smith, Charlotte, Conversations Introducing Poetry; Chiefly on Subjects of Natural History. 2 v. (Johnson, 1804), 4:177-185, 299-301
- Minor Morals, Interspersed with Historical Anecdotes and Original Stories. 2v. (Crosby), 2:381-382, 495
- Rambles Further, A Continuation of "Rural Walks." 2 v. (Cadell), 2:381
- Rural Walks in Dialogues. 2 v. (Cadell), 2:381, 495
- Smith, Thomas, Shepherd's Son; or, The Wish Accomplished (Newbery, 1800), 1:324-325; Universal Atlas, and Introduction to Modern Geography (Harris, 1802), 1:207-208
- Smythies, Miss, *History of a Pin, as Related by Itself* (Newbery, 1801), 1:423
- Soave, Francesco, Moral Tales. Translated by P. R. Rota (Wingrave, 1802), 2:125
- Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor, Ladies Committee for the Education and Employment of the Female Poor, "Address to Ladies," 3:251-254, 262; "Cottager's Religious Meditations" (Rivingtons

- and Hatchard), 2:371-373. See also Philanthropic Societies
- Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), 2:153, 4:58-61. See also Philanthropic Societies
- Society for the Suppression of Vice, "Address to the Public," 2:127-128, 3:148-150; "Occasional Report," 5:96. See also Philanthropic Societies
- Socrates, 4:341, 346; Socratic method, 2:214-219, 227-228, 3:363-371. See also Philosophy
- Solemn Questions for Those Who Profess Themselves Members of the Church of England. By a Clergyman of That Church. 3 pts. (RTS, no. XXXVI), 5:48-50
- Solomon, 4:222-224. See also Monarchy and monarchs
- Some Hints to Young Women (Fcnn), 1:514-515
- Some Seasonable Cautions (Jones, Rev. W.), 1:162-168, 223-232
- Somerville, Elizabeth, *The Birthday;* or, *Moral Dialogues and Stories* (Crosby), 1:301
 - Flora; or, The Deserted Child (Longman), 2:182-183
 - Leading Strings to Knowledge; or, Dame Wise and Her Pupils; in Progressive Lessons (Ostell, 1806), 5:297
 - Mabel Woodbine and Her Sister Lydia (Crosby and Co., 1802), 1:300
 - New Children in the Wood; or, The Welch Cottagers (Crosby), 1:300-301

- Preludes to Knowledge; or, Amusing and Instructive Conversations on History, Astronomy, Geography, Optics, and the Division of Time in Different Countries (Jones, 1803), 4:166-169
- Sacred Lectures from the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testament. 2 v. (Hurst, 1803), 3:268-273
- Village Maid; or, Dame Burton's Moral Stories; to Which are Added, Plain Stories (Vernor & Hood, 1801), 2:424
- Songs, reviews: Oakman, Moral Songs, 2:245-246
 - Plumptre, J., Collection of Songs, 4:414-416
 - Watts, Divine Songs, 4:158; Hymns and Moral Songs, 2:360-363

Songsters of the Grove (Glasgow: Lumsden and Son), 1:505

Sons, 1:503, 2:83. See also Family Sorrows of Selfishness (West), 1:66-67 Sorrows of Young Werther (Goethe), 1:77-80, 318

Soul: 2:117-118, 385-386, 3:364-372, 396-400, 5:35-36; teaching about, 2:83, 215-219; transmigration of, 2:309

Sparrow (Kendall), 1:423-424 Spectator (Addison & Steele), 1:62, 429, 433, 3:387, 388, 4:304-308, 5:130, 147-148

Spellers. See Reading and Readers Spoiling, 1:351, 5:154-157, 263 Stanhope, Phillip Dormer, Lord Chesterfield. See Chesterfield, Lord "Statement of the Subscription to Charlotte Richardson's *Poems*" (Cappe), 5:427-428

Steele, Richard. See Addison & Steele

Sterne, Laurence, 4:92

Sternhold & Hopkins, 5:186

Stonhouse, Sir James, Spiritual Directions, 2:247

Stories for Children (Plumptre, A.), 3:168-170

Stories of Senex (Kendall), 1:425

Strictures and Remarks on Novels: Goethe, *Werther*, 1:77-80; Rousseau, *Nouvelle Héloise*, 1:138-141. See also Fiction; Novels

"Strictures on the Duty of Masters and Mistresses" (B., J. W. L., correspondent), 1:279-284

Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education (More), 1:514, 2:29n, 402, 481-485

"Strictures on the 'Universal Prayer" (Trimmer, S.), 2:454-461

Struve, Christian Augustus, Familiar View of the Domestic Education of Children during the Early Periods of Their Lives, Translated from the Gernan (Murray and Highley, 1802), 2:342-343

Subscriptions, for books, 4:433-436, 5:95-96, 427-428

"Subjects for Consideration" (Reynolds), 4:157

Sublime, 3:164

Summer Amusements (Lane, 1799), 3:383-389

Sunday Miscellany, in Prose and Verse, for Young Persons (Newbery), 3:167-168 Sunday schools, 5:58-66. See also Schools

"Sunday's Excursion" (RTS, no. XXVII), 4:394

Superstition, 1:228-230

Swift, Jonathan, 3:291

Sympathy, 2:166-168. See also Benevolence

Systems of Divinity (Burckhardt), 2:227-235

Systematical Arrangement of the Animal Kingdom (Fenn), 4:171-172 Systems of Education: Badger,

Systems of Education: Badget Friendly Admonitions, 3:344-352

— Barrow, Essay on Education, 1:112-118, 192-197

— Bell, Experiment in Education, 4:370-382

— Burckhardt, System of Divinity, 2:227-235

— Burton, Lectures on Female Education, 3:351-356

— Campe, New Robinson Crusoe, 3:356-360; Tales and Colloquial Extracts, 3:360-372

- Cappe, Observations on Charity Schools, 4:201-205

— Cowan, Anthropaeideia, 4:154-155

— Crespigny, Letters of Advice, 3:84-90

— Day, History of Sandford and Merton, 3:93-96

— Edgeworth, M. and R., *Practical Education*, 1:490-498, 2:30-43, 92-101, 163-171

— Gellert, *Life*, 4:271-291

— Genlis, Adelaide and Theodore, 2:293-302; New Method of Instruction, 3:150-159

- Hamilton, Letters, 1:50-61, 2:106-112; Memoirs of the Life of Agrippina, 4:382-392, 5:45-48
- Kendall, *Parental Education*, 2:100-106
- Lancaster, Improvements in Education, 2:171-175
- More, *Hints*, 4:291-294; *Strictures*, 2:481-485
- Parents' Friend, 3:254-259
- Rousseau, *Émile*, 1:184-191, 374-381
- Simons, Moral Education; Sequel to Moral Education, 4:256-271
- Struve, Familiar View, 2:342-343
- Thoughts on the Education of Those Who Would Imitate the Great, 3:91-93

Thoughts on the Education, Author of, "Observations on Some of Mr. Locke's Rules," 3:159-164, 263-267

- Wakefield, Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex, 3:259-263
- West, Letters to a Young Lady, 5:151-162, 262-271
- Williams, D., Lectures, 2:410-415. See also Education

T

T., M., correspondent, "Private Education," 3:106-108
Table games. See Board games

Tableau d'histoire naturelle (Montaign), 4:106
Tacitus, 4:387-388. See also History

- Tagg, Tommy, Collection of Pretty Poems for the Amusement of Children (York: Wilson and Spence, 1800), 1:428-429
- Take Your Choice (Playful), 1:197-198
- Tales, 2:190-191; reviews: Andrews, Manuscripts of Vertudeo, 1:127-128
 - Anecdotes of a Little Family, 1:423
 - Beautiful Page, 1:303-304
 - Berquin, *Children's Friend*, 2:436-446
 - Cameron, *History of Margaret Whyte*, 1:392-393
 - Campe, Tales and Colloquial Extracts, 3:360-372
 - Ducray-Duminil, Little Mountaineers, 2:446
 - Edgeworth, M., Frank, 2:240-245
 Harry and Lucy, 2:175-182
 Little Dog Trusty, 2:302-304
 Parent's Assistant, 2:353-360, 415-418
 - Rosamond, 2:235-239
 Evening Recreations, 1:437
 - Fenwick, Mary and Her Cat, 4:412-413
 - Fielding, Governess, 1:137-138
 - Filial Duty, 2:186-188
 - Fisherman, 1:437
 - Gleaner, 3:383-389
 - Grandmother's Stories, 1:306
 - Gulliver, *Instructive Lessons*, 1:508
 - Hamlain, 1:312-315
 - History of a School-Boy, 1:434-435

- History of Little King Skilful, 1:504
- Hurry, Tales, 2:491-492
- Jauffret, Little Hermitage, 1:119-122; Tales, 4:185-186
- Johnson, R., *Toy-Shop*, 2:183-184
- Juvenile Library, 1:316-317
- Juvenile Mirror, 4:186
- Juvenile Stories, 1:502-503
- Juvenile Tales, 3:383-389
- Kendall, Stories of Senex, 1:425
- Kilner, D., Histories of a Great Many Girls and Boys, 1:123-124

Histories of More Children than One, 1:123-124

Holiday Present, 1:123-124

- Kilner, M., Jemima Placid,1:124; William Sedley, 3:98
- Peacock, Little Emigrant, 1:198; Visit for a Week, 1:319
- Pilkington, Tales of the Cottage, 1:302-303; Tales of the Hermitage, 1:123
- Plumptre, A., Stories for Children, 3:168-170
- Plunkett, Village Library, 1:318-319
- S., E., Cup of Sweets, 3:166 Gertrude, 3:166-167 Interesting Tales, 4:194-195
- Somerville, Flora, 2:182-183 Mabel Woodbine, 1:300 New Children in the Wood, 1:300-304

Preludes to Knowledge, 4:166-169

- Tales for Youth, 2:188
- Tales of the Arbour, 1:198-200

- Triumph of Good Nature, 1:428
- W., S., Puzzle for a Curious Girl, 2:112-113

Visit to a Farm House, 3:376-377

Visit to London, 4:173-177

- Winlove, Collection, 2:47
- Youth's Monitor, 1:123

Tales, cautionary: Darton, Chapters of Accidents, 1:509

Tales, moral: Edgeworth, M., *Moral Tales*, 2:425-432

- Hunter, Letters from Mrs. Palmerstone, 5:82-88
- Hurry, Faithful Contrast, 4:74; Rational Amusement, 2:491-492
- Margery, History of Young Edwin, 1:422-423
- Pinchard, Two Cousins, 1:441
- Roberts, M., Telescope, 4:82-83
- Soave, Moral Tales, 2:125

Tales, oriental: Adventures of Kamoula, 1:319-320

- Brewer, Life of Rolla, 2:189-192; Siamese Tales, 2:497-498
- Christmas Tales, 3:383-389
- Dodsley, *Economy*, 1:455-461
- Enchanted Mirror, 1:440
- Governess, 2:488-489
- Hive, 3:383-389
- Juvenile Tales, 3:383-389
- Kendall, Adventures of Musul, 1:425. See also Fiction

Tales for Youth; or, The High Road to Renown through the Paths of Pleasure; Being a Collection of Tales, Illustrative in Alphabetical Arrangement of Subjects, the Observance of Which Will Enable Young Men to Arrive with Respectability at the Pinnacle of Fame (Lane), 2:188 Tales of the Arbour; or, Evening's Rewards for Morning Studies (Vernor & Hood, 1800), 1:198-200 Tales of the Genii (Ridley), 2:408 Taylor, Adam, Useful Arithmetic; or, The Most Necessary Parts of the Science of Numbers Rendered Easy (Longman, 1804), 3:302-303 Taylor, Ann and Jane, Original Poems for Infant Minds. 2 v. (Dar-

Taylor, Rev. T. G., "Answer to the Question, Why Are You a Churchman?" 4:60

ton & Harvey, 1804-1805), 4:77-

Tea-Table Dialogues (Johnson, R.), 1:308

Teachers: 1:5, 4:104-105, 5:3-4

82, 410-412

- children as, 2:344, 3:158
- -- deaf-mutes, of, 1:438-440
- French, 1:6-7, 2:254-255
- Gellert as, 4:279-280, 282-283
- governesses as, 1:7, 7n, 368-370, 2:19, 213-214, 359, 416, 491-492, 3:107, 109
- schools, Lancastrian, and,4:373-377public, and, 1:2, 2:279-280village, and, 5:1-3
- siblings as, 2:430
- tutors, 1:186-188, 2:199, 4:373-374, 378-379
- women as, 5:185-186, 413-414.See also Education

Teachwell, Mrs. (pseud.). See Fenn, Lady Ellenor *Telescope* (Roberts, M.), 4:82-83 Teller, Wilhelm Abraham. See Deluc, Jean André, Letters on Christiantity Addressed to M. Teller

Temper. See Passions

Temperance. See Appetites

Ten Commandments. See Decalogue

Textbooks. See Reading and readers, reviews

Theatre of Education (Genlis), 2:501, 507-511, 3:385, 388, 389

Thiebault, Memoirs, 4:253-256

Third Chapter of Accidents (Darton), 1:509

"Third Dialogue between a Minister of the Church and His Parishioner, Concerning Those Who Are Called Gospel Preachers and Evangelical Ministers," 4:60

Thirlwall, J., *Diatessarion*, 1:509-511, 3:188-189

Thomson, James, *Seasons*, 1:286, 449, 507

Thoughts on Affectation, Particularly Addressed to Young People (Robinson, 1805), 5:300-304

Thoughts on the Education of Those Who Imitate the Great, as Affecting the Female Character (Hatchard, 1803), 3:91-93;

Thoughts on the Education,
 Author of, "Observations on
 Some of Mr. Locke's Rules,"
 3:159-164, 163-167

"Three Dialogues" (Vivian), 4:156-157

"Three Queries to a Deist" (RTS, no. XLI), 5:163

Thumb, Tom, Bag of Nuts, Ready Cracked; or, Instructive Fables,

- Ingenious Riddles, and Merry Conundrums (Newbery), 1:504
- Time, 1:444-447, 3:353-356, 5:406-407
- Tindal, Matthew, 2:131-132. See also Deism
- "To a Prisoner" (RTS, no. X), 4:159
- "To a Youth" (RTS, no. VIII), 4:158
- "To a Youth at School" (RTS, no. XVIII), 4:296
- "To the Afflicted" (RTS, no. XXI), 4:297
- "To the Spectator of a Funeral" (RTS, no. XLVIII), 5:272
- "To the Unfortunate Female" (RTS, no. IX), 4:159
- Toland, John, 2:70. See also Deism Toleration, 2:234-235, 361-362, 394-395, 4:194
- Toussaint, François Vincent, 4:253-256
- Toy-Shop (Johnson, R.), 2:183-184 Toys: 2:30-35, 344, 3:163, 257-259, 4:77
 - board games, 3:257, 4:77
 - Bureau Typographique, 2:19-20
 - dolls, 2:33-34, 3:157-158, 169-170, 257, 4:413
 - playing cards, 1:301, 391n, 3:258-259
 - Sabbath observance and, 3:349-353
 - teaching and, 1:62, 242-244, 421-422, 2:19-20, 49. See also Play
- Tracts: 2:59, 4:52-58
 - reviews: "Address to Christians," 4:53-58
 - "Advice and Admonition," 3:176-178

- "Anecdotes and Hints," 4:395
- "Appeal to Christians," 5:164-165
- -- "Bible of Divine Authority," 4:395
- Burnet, "Repentance and Happy Death of the Celebrated Earl of Rochester," 4:158
- "Consolations under Afflictions," 4:393-394
- "Cottager's Religious Meditations," 2:371-373
- "Dialogue between a Minister," 5:276-282
- "Dialogue between Two Friends," 4:392-393
- "Dialogue between Two Seamen," 5:271
- Doddridge, "Life of Colonel James Gardiner," 4:295-296;
 "Principles of the Christian Religion," 4:294-295
- "Earnest Exhortation," 3:106
- "Familiar Instructions," 2:53-54
- "Few Minutes of Conversation," 4:396
- "Few Words on the Unreasonableness of Not Attending to the Christian Religion," 2:54
- "Few Words to the Friends of the Poor," 3:105-107
- "Friendly Hints," 4:159
- "Good Old Way," 4:395
- "History of Mrs. Wilkins," 5:272-276
- "Importance of Speaking Truth," 5:163-164
- "Life and Sayings of Mr. Philip Henry," 4:296

- -- "Life of Mr. John Bunyan," 4:159
- -- "Most Important Truths," 3: 284
- "On the Lord's Day," 4:160
- "Pentitent Prostitute," 5:163
- "Persuasives to Public Worship," 4:160-166
- "Prayers for Children," 2:245
- "Reflections on the Present Times," 3:294-296
- "Remember the Sabbath Day,"4:158
- Reynolds, "Subjects for Consideration," 4:157
- Rictrie, "Present for Youth," 1:515-523
- "Season of Scarcity," 4:296
- "Short Narrative of...King Charles II," 5:422-423
- "Short Practical Explanation," 2:246-248
- "Short Prayers for Every Evening," 5:53
- "Short Prayers for Every Morning," 5:51-53
- "Sixteen Short Sermons," 5:51
- Solemn Questions, 5:48-50
- "Sunday's Excursion," 4:394
- "Three Queries," 5:163
- "To a Prisoner," 4:159
- "To a Youth," 4:158
- "To a Youth at School," 4:296
- "To the Afflicted," 4:297
- "To the Spectator of a Funeral," 5:272
- "To the Unfortunate Female," 4:159
- "Two Dialogues between a Corporal and a Private," 5:272

- Vivian, "Three Dialogues between a Minister and One of His Parishioners," 4:156-157
- -- "Warning Voice," 5:165-167
- Watts, "Advice to a Young Man," 5:50-51
 Divine Songs, 4:158
 "End of Time," 4:158
 - "Golden Rule," 4:159
- West, "Friendly Address," 3:105-106
- "Word of Advice," 4:395-396
- "Word to the Wise," 3:297

Trades, reviews: Aikin, Arts of Life, 1:118-119

- Book of Trades, 4:304
- Little Jack of All Trades, 5:55-56
- W., S., Visit to a Farm House, 3:376-377
- Translations: 1:63, 2:250, 446, 3:150, 4:186, 272
 - French, from the, reviews: Adventures of Kamoula, 1:319-320
 - Aulnoy, Mother Bunch's Fairy Tales, 2:185; Renowned History of the White Cat, 1:432
 - Ducray-Duminil, *Little Mountaineers*, 2:446
 - Genlis, Age of Chivalry, 2:433-434
 - Jauffret, Little Hermitage, 1:119-122; Tales, 4:185-186; Visits to the Menagerie, 1:201-202
 - Perrault, Histories and Tales of Past Times, 2:185-186
 - S., E., *Interesting Tales*, 4: 194-195

- Saint-Pierre, Indian Cottage, 2:364-369; Paul and Virginia, 2:369-371
- Youth's Monitor, 1:123
- German, from the, reviews: Gessner, Death of Abel, 1:203-207
 Haller, Letters, 2:50-53
 Kotzebue, Guardian Angel, 1:317-318
- Italian, from the, reviews: Soave, *Moral Tales*, 2:125
- Travels and voyages: 5:25, 81; reviews: Gardiner, Excursion, 5:425
 - Mayor, Historical Account, 5:81
 - Wakefield, Family Tour, 3:283-284; Juvenile Travellers, 1: 134-137
- Trifles (Sandham), 1:427-428
 Trifles for Children. 3 pts. (Darton & Harvey), 1:429-430
- Trimmer, Mary, *History of Quad*rupeds (Tegg & Castleman, 1803), 3:284
- Trimmer, Sarah, Attempt to Familiarize the Catechism of the Church of England, 2:478n
 - childhood reading, 1:62, 320, 325, 2:113-114, 4:413-414
 - Comment on Dr. Watts's "Divine Songs," 5:66
 - Companion to the Book of Common Prayer, 2:478n
 - Essay on Christian Education,
 1:34-39, 99-106, 169-183,
 232-244, 285-298, 347-374,
 411-422, 482-490, 2:13-30,
 82-92, 150-163, 210-226, 282-295, 331-342, 398-410, 464-481

- Explanation of the Offices of the Public Baptism of Infants, 2:478n
- Help to the Unlearned in the Study of Holy Scriptures, 4:106-109
- Introduction to the Knowledge of Nature, 3:265-266
- Little Spelling Book, 3:375-376
- "Memoirs of David Hume, esq.," 2:1-3
- "Observations upon Pope's Essay on Man, as Unfavorable to the Doctrines of Revealed Religion, and Founded upon Lord Bolingbroke's System," 2:257-272, 321-324, 385-395, 449-454
- "Observations on the Changes Which Have Taken Place in Books for Children and Young Persons," 1:1-16, 61-66
- Oeconomy of Charity, 5:58
- piracies of, 2:360-361, 363, 3:284
- Scripture Catechism, 2:284n
- Scripture Prints, 2:161
- Sequel to the Essay on Christian Education, 3:1-82, 113-139, 209-229, 305-323, 4:1-31, 113-141, 209-229, 313-340, 5:97-117, 193-235, 305-399
- Teacher's Assistant, 2:153, 214n
- "Strictures on the 'Universal Prayer,' " 2:454-461
- verse dedicated to, 4:308-312
 Trinity, 3:141-147, 4:144-153, 237-244
 Tripp, Tommy, Pretty Book of Pictures for Little Masters and Misses (Newbery), 1:432

Triumph of Good Nature, Exhibited in the History of Master Harry Fairborn and Master Trueworth (Newbery), 1:428 Truelove, Mr., Adventures of a Silver Three-Pence (Newbery), 1:505 Truthfulness, 2:98-101, 242 Tutors, 1:186-188, 2:199, 4:373-374, 378-379. See also Teachers Twin Sisters (Sandham), 5:70-79 Two Cousins (Pinchard), 1:441 "Two Dialogues between a Corporal and a Private Soldier. Written by a Lieutenant Colonel in the Army" (RTS, no. XLVII), 5:272 "Two Letters to a Predestinarian" (Jones, Rev. W.), 1:344-347, 408-411 Two Princes of Persia (Porter), 1:132-133 Typology, 4:1-31, 113-141, 209-227. See also Christianity

U

Unfortunate Mother's Advice (Pennington), 1:325-327 Universal Atlas (Smith, T.), 1:207-208 "Universal Prayer" (Pope), 2:184, 232, 454-461, 423 Useful Arithmetic (Taylor, Adam), 3:302-303

V

Vain Cottager; or, The History of Lucy Franklin; to Which Are Prefixed, A Few Hints to Young Women in Humble Life, Respecting the Decency and Propriety of Dress (Hatchard, 1804), 3:296-297 Valentine and Orson; or, The Surprising Adventures of the Two Sons of the Emperor of Greece. New ed. (Harris, 1804), 4:75 Valentine's Gift, 1:424 Veillées du Chateau (Genlis), 1:302 Ventum, Harriet, Amiable Tutoress: or, The History of Mary and Jane Hornsby (T. Hurst and E. Newbery, 1801), 1:324 — Interesting Traits of Character in Youth of Both Sexes (Harris, 1804), 4:90 — Juvenile Instruction, 1:512-513 View of the Principal Deistical Writers (Leland), 2:65-73, 129-140 Village Library (Plunkett), 1:318-319 Village Maid (Somerville), 2:424 Village School (Kilner, D.), 1:123-124 Villette, C. L. de, Essay on the Happiness of the Life to Come. 4th ed. (Robinsons, 1800), 5:235-243 Virtue, 1:139-141, 2:451-453, 4:341-347, 420, 425-426, 5:33-38 Virtue in a Cottage; or, A Mirror for Children in Humble Life, 1:435 Visit for a Week (Peacock), 1:319 Visit to a Farm House (W., S.), 3:376-377 Visit to London (W., S.), 4:173-177 Visits to the Menagerie (Jauffret), 1:201-202, 316 Vivian, Rev. Thomas, "Three Dialogues between a Minister and One of His Parishioners on the Three Principles of Religion and

Salvation by Jesus Christ" (RTS,

Voltaire: anti-Christian conspiracy

no. 11), 4:156-157

and, 1:9-10, 145-152; death of, 1:273-279; *Encyclopédie* and, 1:210-217, 2:196. See also Freethinking

W

- W., S., Puzzle for a Curious Girl (Tabart), 2:112-113
 - Visit to a Farm House; or, An Introduction to the Various Subjects Connected to Rural Economy (Tabart, 1804), 3:376-377
 - Visit to London (Tabart, 1805), 4:173-177
- Wakefield, Gilbert, 5:192. See also Freethinking
- Wakefield, Priscilla, Domestic Recreation; or, Dialogues Illustrative of Natural and Scientific Subjects (Darton & Harvey, 1805), 4:402-410
 - Family Tour, through the British Empire (Darton & Harvey, 1804), 3:283-284
 - Juvenile Anecdotes, Founded on Facts. 2 v. (Darton & Harvey, 1798), 1:266-267
 - Juvenile Travellers (Darton & Harvey, 1801), 1:134-137
 - Leisure Hours. 3rd ed. 2 v., 1:264-265
 - Mental Improvement. 4th ed. 3
 v. (Darton & Harvey, 1801), 1:265-266
- Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex (Johnson, 1798), 3:259-263
 Waller, Edmund, 3:287

- War: 2:308-309, 345-346, 382, 443, 4:20-25, 126-136, 5:95-96; Nelson, Horatio, 1:501-503, 5:95-96; soldiers, 3:95-96
- "Warning Voice" (RTS, no. XLV), 5:165-167
- Waterland, Dr., Abstract of a Discourse Concerning the Fundamentals of the Christian Religion, 4: 343-357; On the Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity, 4:144-153, 237-244
- Watkins, John, Scripture Biography; or, The Lives and Characters of the Principal Personages Recorded in the Sacred Writings (Phillips, 1802), 1:269-270
- Watts, Isaac, "Advice to a Young Man Entering upon the World," 1: 433; review: (RTS, no. XXXVII), 5:50-51
 - Divine Songs, 1:511, 2:90, 152, 3:362-363; review: (RTS, no. V), 4:158
 - "End of Time" (RTS, no. IV), 4:158
 - "Golden Rule" (RTS, no. XIII), 4:159
 - Historical Catechisms, 2:25n
 - Hymns and Moral Songs for the Use of Children, Revised and Altered by a Lady; to Which are Added, Prayers for the Use of Children, 2:360-363
 - Hymns for Children, 2:45
 - Improvement of the Mind, 1:77n; review: 2:424-425
 - Short View of the Whole Scripture History, 4:114n

- Treatise on the Education of Children and Youth, 1:495, 2:219-225
- Welbeloved, Charles, *Devotional Exercises*, for the Use of Young Persons. 2nd ed. (Johnson, 1803), 5:79-81 Werther (Goethe), 1:77-80, 318
- West, Jane, "Friendly Address to the Labouring Part of the Community, Concerning the Present State of Public Affairs in Church and State" (Hatchard), 3:105-106
 - Infidel Father, 2:74-82
 - Letters Addressed to a Young Man on His First Entrance into Life, 1:77-80, 138-141; review: 3 v. (Longman & Rees), 1:76-77
 - Letters to a Young Lady. 3 v. (Longman, 1806), 5:151-162, 262-271
 - Poems and Plays. v. 3 and 4. (Longman, 1805), 4:308-312
 - Sorrows of Selfishness; or, The History of Miss Richmore (Longman, Rees and J. Harris, 1802), 1:66-67
- Wheatley, Sarah, Christmas Fire-Side; or, The Juvenile Critics (Longman, 1806), 5:167-180; Friendly Adviser, and Juvenile Monitor (Sael, 1802), 1:440
- Wilkinson, Rebecca, Sermons to Children; To Which Are Added, Short Hymns, Suited to the Subjects. 5th ed. (Williams, 1802), 1:512 William Sedley (Kilner, M.), 3:98 Williams, David: 3:255; Lectures on
- Education, 2:229, 2:410-415 Willis, Richard (bishop of Winchester),

- "Sermon on the Duties of Parents to Children" (1704), 1:27-34
- Wilmot, Sir John Eardley, "Letter Written by Bishop Hough of Worcester to Mrs. Knightly," 3:342-344
- Wilmshurst, Mrs., First Part of Progressive Instructions in Reading, Grammar and Geography (Conder, 1802), 2:114-116; First Part of the Pronouncing Spelling Book (Conder, 1802), 2:116
- Wilson, Mrs., Brief Compendium of Juvenile Instruction; or, A Progressive Inlet to Useful Knowledge (Rivingtons, 1803), 4:104-105
- Winlove, Solomon, Collection of the Most Approved Entertaining Stories (Newbery), 2:47; Pleasing Moralist; or, Young Gentlemen and Ladies' Preceptor; Containing Essays on a Variety of Subjects (Millar, 1798), 1:433-434
- Wisdom in Miniature; or, The Young Gentleman and Lady's Pleasing Instructor; Being a Collection of Sentences, Divine, Moral and Historical. New ed. (Lanc, 1799), 1:499-500
- Wollstonecraft, Mary, 1:79, 3:255, 4:246n
- Women: arithmetic, knowledge of and, 5:269-271
 - authors: see under
 Aikin, Lucy
 Andrews, Eliza
 Aulnoy, Marie Catherine
 Badger, Charlotte
 Barbauld, Anna
 Bonhote, Elizabeth
 Bowdler, Elizabeth

Bowdler, Jane Burges, Mary Anne Cameron, Lucy Cappe, Catherine Chapone, Hester Crespigny, Mary Champion Devis, Ellen Edgeworth, Maria Fanshawe, Alethea Fenn, Lady Ellenor Fenwick, Eliza Fielding, Sarah Gardiner, Jane Genlis, Stephanie Grey, Lady Jane Guppy, Mrs. Hamilton, Elizabeth Helme, Elizabeth Hill, Mrs. Hunter, Rachel Hurry, Ives I., P. Kilner, Dorothy Kilner, Mary Ann Lambert, Anne Therèse Le Prince de Beaumont, Jeanne Lewis, Alethea Mangall, Richmal Martin, Sarah Catherine Montolieu, Isabelle More, Hannah Neale, Hannah

Peacock, Lucy

ning)

Pilkington, Mary

Pinchard, Elizabeth Plumptre, Annabella

Pennington, Lady Sarah

Plunkett, Elizabeth (Gun-

Richardson, Charlotte (poetess) Roberts, Eliza Roberts, Margaret Roland, Mme. S., E. S., M. S., Maria Sanders, Charlotte Sandham, Elizabeth Sherwood, Mary Smith, Charlotte Smythies, Miss Somerville, Elizabeth Trimmer, Sarah Ventum, Harriet W., S. Wakefield, Priscilla West, Jane Wheatley, Sarah Wilkinson, Rebecca Wilmshurst, Mrs. Wilson, Mrs. Wollstonecraft, Mary Ziengenhert, S. — beauty, 3:390-394 - charity schools and, 4:202-205 - chastity, 1:495-496 - clothing, 1:268, 500, 2:403-406, 3:296-297, 4:90, 203-205 - characters of, 1:331-333, 334-336, 450-455, 5:136-139, 410-417

— condition of, 3:252, 344-347

duties of, 3:92-93, 169-170education of, 1:53-54, 2:256,

5:133, 185-186

260-261

302, 3:259-263, 344-353,

— employment for, 3:252-254,

- freethinking and, 2:482-485
- governesses, 1:7, 368-370, 2:19, 213-214, 359, 416, 491-492, 3:107, 109
- French Revolution, effects upon, 1:194-195
- Ladies' Committee of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor, 3:251-254
- modesty and, 2:194, 201, 256
- mothers. See Mothers
- nursery maids, 1:181-182, 190,232-233, 238, 241-242, 285-286, 370-372, 430, 2:35
- old maids, 5:187-191
- poor, 3:252-254
- teachers, as, 5:185-186
- books for, reviews: Addresses to a Young Lady, 3:200-208
- Aikin, J., Letters to a Young Lady, 3:285-294
- Bowles, Remarks on Modern Female Manners, 1:513-514
- Chapone, Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, 1:330-333
- Devis, Accidence, 3:303
- Fenn, Friend of Mothers, 2:49
 Mother's Grammar, 2:26
 Mrs. Lovechild's Series of Grammatical Knowledge, 4:199-200
 Rational Dame, 1:200
 - Some Hints, 1:514-515
 Systematic Arrangement of
 the Animal Kingdom,
 4:171-172
- Genlis, *Theatre of Education*, 2:507-511
- Gisborne, Enquiry into the

- Duties of the Female Sex, 3:335-342
- Haller, Letters, 2:50-53
- Hanway, Domestic Happiness Promoted, 2:493-494
- "History of Mrs. Wilkins," 5:272-276
- Hunter, Letters from Mrs. Palmerstone, 5:82-88
- I., P., Dramatic Pieces, 2:377-381
- Kilner, D., Dialogues and Letters, 3:98
- Letters of Consolation, 3:189-195
- Lewis, Essays on the Art of Being Happy, 3:199-200
- Pennington, Unfortunate Mother's Advice, 1:325-327
- Pilkington, Mirror for the Female Sex, 2:319-320
- S., M., Letters from a Mother, 5:425-426
- Sherwood, History of Susan Gray, 1:267-268
- Smith, C., Rambles Further, 2:381; Rural Walks, 2:381
- "To the Unfortunate Female," 4:159
- "Vain Cottager," 3:296-297
- "Wonders of the Sea" (E., H.), 3:164-166
- Woolston, Thomas, 2:72-73, 130-131. See also Deism
- "Word of Advice to Those Who Frequent the Soup Establishments" (RTS, no. XXXI), 4:395-396
- "Word to the Wise; or, Hints to the Unthinking" (Hatchard, 1804), 3:297
- Worlds Displayed (Campbell), 2:106-111

Writing: 2:21, 403; review: Holland, *Definitions*, 4:195-199

Wynne, John Huddlestone, Amusing and Instructive Tales for Youth (Newbery, 1800), 1:425

Y

Young, Edward, 3:293, 5:300 Young Gentleman and Lady's Philosophy (Martin, B.), 1:308 Youth. See Adolescents Youthful Jester (Johnson, R.), 1:507-508 Youth's Monitor: Containing Moral and Instructive Tales (Hurst, 1801), 1:123

\mathbf{Z}

Zeluco (Moore), 2:432
Ziengenhert, S., Epitome of the History of England, Calculated to Assist the Memory of the Infant Reader; with a Key. 2 v. (Bell, 1802), 1:301-302
Zimmermann, Treatise on Solitude, 5:128-130
Zoroaster, 3:143-144







